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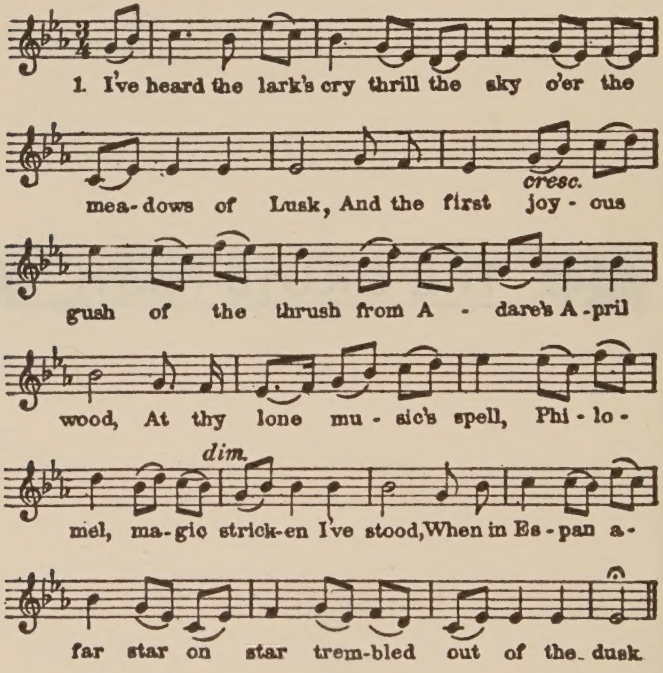
THE DRUID PATH

The Music More Lasting Than Voice of the Birds

Poem by A. P. Graves


1. I've heard the lark's cry thrill the sky o'er the
cresc.
mea-dows of Lusk, And the first joy-ous
gush of the thrush from A-dare's A-pril
wood, At thy lone mu-sic's spell, Phi-lo-
dim.
mel, ma-gic strick-en I've stood, When in Es-pan a-
far star on star trem-bled out of the dusk.

2.

Yet as bright shadows pass from the glass of the
darkening lake
As the rose's rapt sigh must die when
the zephyr is stilled;
In oblivion grey sleeps each lay that
those birds ever trilled,
But the songs Erin sings from her strings shall
immortally wake.

The Druid Path

by

MARAH ELLIS RYAN

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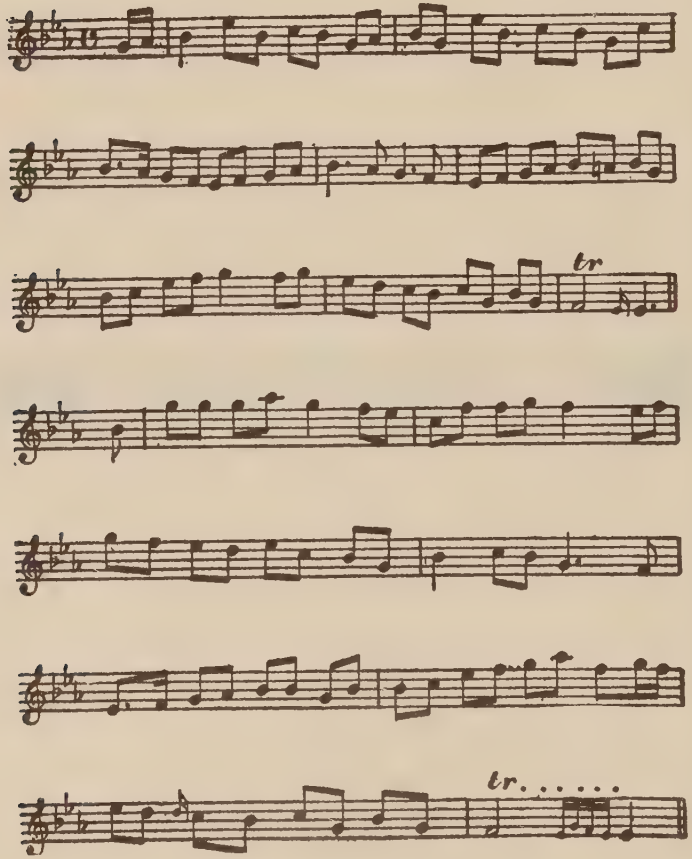
THE DRUID PATH

Una

Traditional Air



THE DRUID PATH

HADRAIG, son of Nihil of the Ua Dinan, held silent his white hound on the hill of Cromm Cru, and looked down the far valley of blue mists where the sea of the west rolled in.

Back beyond the sweet-smelling reaches of the heather he could hear the bay of the hounds of his uncle Kieran, Tiern over North Tormond. He could no longer hear the clink of their silver bridles, nor the laughter of their ladies, nor the scream of hawk on dove.

But the hill of the ancient god was a sweet place in the silence, and he rested there, and made him a pillow of fern — and listened to the soft breath of the wind in the rowan tree. Its sigh of love for the green earth was a sweet song, and he slept there to that music, while the sun rushed beyond the wide seas of the west, and soft-footed dusk crept after, filling all the hollows with the gray web in which the night is held.

A curious dream of white birds came to him there; the dream had come to him before, yet not with clearness — and in the dream was a dusk path in an ancient wood, and a well there — a well rising and sinking with the tide, and a vision of a maid moving before him into the shadows — a vision swathed in a white cloud, with hidden face but a voice in which was held all the music of beauty of life in all the world. His soul was as a harp on which that music played, and his body was but as a shell left behind

while the wings of harmony lifted him—lifted until he was borne as a cloud far from the touch of the earth—and he heard a word over and over in his ear, until he strove with might to echo it, and then, in the striving, the smell of the heather was again in his nostrils, and the forefeet of the white hound were on his breast, and above him a star shone in the soft rose of the sky.

He lay entranced, thrilled by the ecstasy of the perfect dream, and somewhere from the very earth came a song to his ear and an earth echo of the word he had striven for and missed. And this was the song he heard—

Make strong your charms against Danaan,
Danaan of the snowy breast,
Who lured the souls of the Gods of Old
To the land of the mystic west.

The voices were those of two boys, and with them was an old shepherd who bore fire in a strange bowl of thin carven stone, and in the arms of the boys were dry heather and branches of yew. And in fear they let fall the yew at sight of Phadraig, and at sight of his white hound beside him.

"Peace to you," spake Phadraig. "And who be you to sing here a song of charms? And who is Danaan?"

"A blessing of all saints on you from Jerusalem to Innis Gluair," spake the ancient who bore the fire. "We bear here boughs for the puring fires of Beltain, and the mothers of these boys bade them make a prayer and sing the song ere they crossed the three magic circles of the Tor of Cromm Cru."

"And is this that hill?" asked Phadraig. "As a childling they tell me I was nursed in sight of it, but never before have I stood on it, and who made the song of the charm?"

"One of the anointed of the saints who loved every

plain and black crag and forest dell between us and the sea. It was no other than Nihil of the Deep Wood."

"Strange, that is," said Phadraig, the son of Nihil, "other songs of that singer I have been taught, but never this one until I hear it as in a dream in this strange place; and look, there are white sea birds against the stars — and they also were of the dream."

"On the night of Beltain strange power is abroad — and strange dreams! And what is the name of you who venture to sleep on the hill of the ancient gods in the dusk of this day?"

And when Phadraig told him, the old herdsman would have knelt, but Phadraig took his hand and spoke to him in kindness, yet could get from him no other word as to the song of Danaan.

"Go to Roiseen of the Glen, the wise woman down by the sea," he said. "She was nurse to you and knows all your father Nihil would have had you know of the names of the ancient gods of the land."

"But Danaan was the name of a people — the old, old people, soul brothers to the fairies!"

"Ay — it may be. And may not a people have a spirit, as has a person? Have we not our own this day in Erinn, our Mother of the Land? Ask me no more, O Lord of the Ua Dinan, but go you down to Roiseen of the Glen, and peace go with you."

And with his white hound at his heels and one of the shepherd boys as guide, Phadraig took trail to the sea glen and would have gone through a deep wood in the valley, but the boy drew back.

"Not there, my lord," said he.

"Yet it is the shorter way."

"No way is shorter if you never come out alive, O Lord of the Ua Dinan."

"What abides within the wood?"

"No living thing, my lord, but the water in the Druid's well, and it pulses there as if it might be the heartbeat of the ocean beyond, yet the water is not salt."

"This is a land of strange riddles I am coming back to this day," said Phadraig, "but do you not hear music in the wood—or is it the wind through the new buds?"

"The priest tells us it is the winds, or the waves, or the night birds in their shelter, and that is the thing we must say," said the boy, and neither of them spoke of the white birds above them against the sky.

To Phadraig it was as if he had walked into a new life from the hour he slept on the western hill of Cromm Cru. And all the path of it held music to make the heart glad of life—yet sad with inarticulate yearnings. The life of the halls of Kieran was left behind, and he trod the heath as an exile returned.

In the cot of Roiseen of the Glen there was a rabbit stewing on the hearth, and Roiseen herself spinning the silver flax at the open door in the starlight.

"Oh, is it yourself come back on your own feet to greet me this day?" she said, and wept with very gladness, and kissed the young hand of him. But he kissed her brown cheek instead, and they talked long after the shepherd boy was asleep in the forest leaves in the byre.

But it was not that night of Beltain that Phadraig asked of the unknown things, for he had noted the salt sprinkled on the threshold to bar out influences of the old gods; so that night they talked of Nihil, dead ere he had seen his son, and Kreda, his wife, dead at the birthing, and all the grandeurs of the house of the Ua Dinan where Phadraig had lived his life of training for the work of a chief. Yet out of it all he had come back with the heart of a boy, and sat on a three-legged stool at the door of Roiseen, and

fashioned a flute of alder-wood, and piped on it in the sunshine of the morning.

Then, when the milk was put away, and Roiseen settled with the distaff and the whirling strands, he spoke the name singing in his heart.

"Mother Roiseen, it is to you I am coming with a thing to ask: who is Danaan of the birds of white?"

"That you should ask it, and you with the name of a saint on you! Get you to your hawking or hunting the deer! And see that you pluck primroses to scatter at your door this night that the Ancient People send you no call of Danaan — the men who follow the call wander far."

"To the land of the mystic west do they wander?"

"Ay, that they do; far over the green meadows of the waters where the horses of Lir have their pastures. From the cliff below you can see them running in races endlessly to the shore."

"I see the waves run in," said Phadraig, but she was not to be fooled.

"Ay, and more than the waves to you, as to your father! But you are idling in thought, Phadraig, son of Nihil."

"What other task when there is peace in Tormond? And the Ua Dinan, as you mayhaps have heard, cannot abide the sight of me near his ailing son, and Kethlen his wife, bitter as gall because she has borne a weakling."

"True that is. You stand in their eyes as a threat at the crowns they wear."

"To me a pipe on the hills instead, and the songs of my father to sing! Roiseen, why has the song of Danaan never been given me?"

"That name has been through the ages a hated word to the women of your house and in each generation they try to smother it out."

"And why is that?"

"It gave a youth the seeking eye and the wandering foot, and it was said to keep young the heart of a man when all his mates went tottering under the sod. No—the women could not abide the thought of that, and they smother it out. Ay, that is the way with the woman-heart."

"Mother Roiseen, there is a deer for you in the forest. Shall Snard and I bring it in tomorrow's morn?"

And the white hound, hearing his name spoken, flailed the floor with his tail and rose up and waited.

"To what would you bribe me, Phadraig, my heart?"

"To peace and content while I tell you I heard the song of Danaan on the hill of Cromm Cru in the dusk of Beltain—and I felt the music that all the songs of Nihil, my father, could not give voice to, and in my dream I looked in that Druid well of the wood, and saw the heart of the ocean beat there under the stars! All this came to me by chance in the place of fire to Beltain, so mine is the right to ask what I ask."

And Roiseen, the wise woman, looked on him and made the sign and plucked primroses for her door.

"Yours is the right," she said, "come you away from the house and out under the hawthorn tree and what I can say with no hurt to the saints and their faith, that I will. It is said that while many a family trace in pride their fathers to the ancient barbarians, few trace their descent from yon Wise Ones who took themselves into the air with their own enchantment sooner than be conquered. This I heard when I was a girl in the home of the king, your father's father. But Nihil of the songs learned much from a master of tricks, an aged man who said he had lived on the earth in other days when the sea covered all this valley, and that this was the last edge of the land where the Danaan lived on the earth as people, and ate

the honey of bees, and drank the water of the Druid well in the wood beyond."

"Ay," said Phadraig, and he looked over the green velvet of the valley running down to meet the white foam of the sea, white as the hawthorn bloom above them, and from the dark hills he looked to the islands beyond, and it was all a sweet picture of summer under the blue sky. "Ay, Mother Roiseen, of all places in the whole world where would they find another spot so fair? In truth, I believe your word that it is the last corner of the land they could let go to the hard people of the iron pikes."

"So it was, the last place they let go of—and they lingered long after the stranger-people swept over the land to the east. And to your father, Nihil, came a 'sending' of sight through fasting, and enchantments of music, until he spoke aloud the word no other dared ever to speak for them."

"And what was that word, Mother of the Glen?"

"It was of a bond of birth and blood between the Ua Dinan and the Tuathe de Danaan, but the legend of it is against all christian teachings—and we are christian now in Erinn."

Phadraig looked up to the mount of the Druid god where fires of propitiation had burned but a night agone.

"Ay, so we say," he agreed, "but tell me more of Nihil and his song of Danaan."

"He all but had the ban of the Bishop of Clare put on him—and it was backed by some of his own blood whose names I will not speak, for it is evil to speak against the dead! They were mortal shamed to be thought of the blood or the spirit of enchanters, the while Nihil was so proud of it that church itself was called to the question. That was a time of trial! For there was your mother, the Lady Kreda of Kilfernora, not yet either wife or mother,

but loving him and holding him to church, and there was the bishop with his power to bless or ban, and there was Nihil stout in rebellion against all but the sweet Lady Kreda. For his word was this: that if all the mothers for a thousand years could not stamp out the call of Danaan in the heart of a man, was it not proof that it was a bond of the spirit, and was for good and not for evil?"

"And then?"

"He was banished to a forest cell for a year and a day for expiation, and that was the time the Lady Kreda chose to ride beside him and do penance beside him. And, at the last, to pleasure her, he made the song of warning against Danaan, and he went into the forest away from the sea, but he was never the same man after! A true singer sings only the songs in his heart, and that was the song made at the word of another, for he, Nihil, had walked the Druid Path to the well over back of beyond, and the white sea birds of Danaan had come to him there, and he heard music of sweetness in the closed hills where the Ancient People are waiting to this day and holding secret the sacred things shut in for the people of the future who will see as your father Nihil saw. That was his word of it many a day as he walked above yon cliff, or up to the hill of Cromm Cru. And the priests beyond could do naught with him, though your mother hated the thoughts he spoke, as did all the women of your race of the Ua Dinan."

"Mayhaps they were but jealous of a knowledge not for them."

"Mayhaps, for true it is the Lady Kreda loved well his songs when he was wooing under her window there in Kilfernora but turned away her head when the songs were of things not of her ken."

"I have had few years, yet I have lived to see that with

other lives," said Phadraig. "What power may a man gain for the world if he only sing songs of love to a mistress who only smiles from a window?"

"You are older than your years, Phadraig, my heart, else it would not be myself sitting here under the hawthorn telling you the ancient things that the priests tell us are false things."

"I do not think in my heart they are false," said Phadraig, son of Nihil. "Into the forest I am going now for your deer, Mother of the Glen, and then, till the next day of Samhain, I will live in the open to give proof to my own heart that Nihil, my father, saw true, and spoke true."

And thus did he, though his kinsmen raged and their women told the priests, and the Ua Dinan tore down the stone of Cromm Cru from the mount and broke it into pieces with iron chisels — for it is well known that spirits of the Tuathe de Danaan hate the touch of the iron brought into the land by the barbarians.

But Phadraig with his pipe of alder was somewhere in the deep wood with only the white hound and his dreams and his calls to the tamed sea birds on the cliffs, and never a sight could kindred get of him unless it was in a boat, dancing on the far waves toward Inis Mor — or high on the hill where the forest veiled him if any tried to follow.

And a wail went up from the shepherds that year, for the murrain got the sheep despite of all, and some wells went dry, and the herders gave sullen looks to the virtuous lords and ladies who had done that pious work in tearing down Cromm Cru of the Tor.

And one day there came to Roiseen of the Glen a lady riding on a white horse with golden trapping. Her eyes were dark with desire and her braided hair had the gold

of the sun glinting its brown shadows. With her came a priest of the south whose looks were down and ill.

"I am Yva of Kilfernora," said the maid, with a blush sweeping her face. "Have you, O woman, speech with Phadraig of the Wilds?"

"That was the place his mother came from," said Roiseen of the Glen, "and I have seen no sign of him this seven days, barring the white sea birds hovering over the forest of the Druid well."

"Woman," said the priest, "what would drive sea birds to the forest on days like this?"

"Ay, it is a big question, your holiness, and a thousand years have not given us the answer."

"Do you mean the blasphemy of enchantment too strong for church to conquer?"

"I would not dare, your holiness; mayhaps it is that the church has not striven. Sea birds are a small thing to take note of after all."

"O woman," said Yva the brown-eyed, "will you tell him I have ridden the horse he loved to these wilds he loves, that he may know my message is a true message, and that I watch from my window ever to these hills of the north?"

"That he may find the way to that window, O Lady?"

"Ay, that he may find the way. The Ua Dinan and the head of my clan have clasped hands and emptied bowls of mead on the pact, and I bring my own message to his hills."

"How great is your patience, Yva of Kilfernora?" asked old Roiseen of the Glen, and the priest frowned at the forwardness of the peasant, but Yva of the dark tresses leaned forward in the saddle.

"What mean you?" she asked, her lips red and parted over white teeth.

"Would you take him as Nihil, his father, was taken, with his quest not finished, nor his heart content?"

"Nihil, the Singer, died," said Yva, her eyes staring.

"Ay, he died! With love beside him—earthly love keeping step, yet not understanding, he died! Would you fain have Phadraig, son of Nihil, dead by your side or alive and free to choose after he has made the circle that was broken for Nihil?"

"Woman—are you taking on yourself the weighing of a soul?" demanded the priest in anger. "What blasphemy is this of lives in circles and like enchantments? Is it evil craft of Druid witcheries by which the young lord of the Ua Dinan is held here in the wilds?"

"I have not dared to ask him that myself," said Roiseen of the Glen. "But I am an old woman, and I know the men of the Ua Dinan—and their women, too! By bell and book and candle their women have driven out or smothered a wild Something in the blood of the Ua Dinan of the west land, until the clan is weak this day because of it! They have not dared dream their own dreams lest they range beyond the church rules and the women they wive; and what man does any great thing without the Dream—or woman, either? O Lady of Kilfernora, you are beautiful as the wild rose on the heath, and there are many chiefs to break a lance at your nod; better to give your glove to any one of them, than enchain an Ua Dinan before he has followed the Dream till it makes the circle."

The priest was prone to chide such speech, as was his duty, but Yva of Kilfernora put out her ringed hand.

"She speaks truly, and I see it," she said. "No one has ever spoken thus to me before today. Think back, reverend father, over the years: Nihil dead with his songs half written; the king, his brother, a man of gloom with a crippled child; the old king, his father, tired of rule and

in a monastery ere his time; yet, all these men were strong in youth and to the fore in wild beauty. Not until now has anyone dared read me that riddle of the Ua Dinan. Woman, you are wise and you have Yva of Kilfernora for your friend. I ride back and dream my own dream, and leave him all the freedom of his. Fare you well!"

"Now indeed may a great day come again to the children of the Ua Dinan," said Roiseen of the Glen. She went back to the spinning of her flax, with a great jewel hidden in her bosom, let fall there by Yva of the dark hair and the burning eyes.

And in the green-gray dusk of the twilight there was the flash of white wings against streaks of yellow sky, and the white hound came down the glen by the sheep path, and Phadraig the wanderer, with a hare of the hills ready for the twigs over the roasting fire.

"Art tired of the quest, Phadraig?"

"Nay, not that, Mother of the Glen. I am no longer alone, though I cannot tell you what walks beside me."

"None of us can, and for lack of faith few can feel them," agreed Roiseen.

"But Nihil, my father, spoke truth, we do belong," said Phadraig. "Once I saw the shadow of her in the Druid well in the moon's light, but the face was still veiled for me, but the music is piercing sweet, and I would I had my father's gift to catch and hold it."

He would eat not any of the hare, but drank fresh milk from the cow and stood at the door looking tired and white in the starlight.

"May I let stay Snard, the hound, with you?" he asked. "He is weary of my trail, and will not walk in my paths; only today did I learn I was cruel to him; and tomorrow is the feast of Samhain, and where I go I cannot say, but I think it is not for Snard to follow me."

"Phadraig, my heart, do you ever think of someone there in the south, who—"

"Ay, Roiseen. I thought of them all today when a storm cloud swept in from the sea with a clammy cold in it. For it was not so cold as the welcome in my kinsman's home lest the day come when I claim rule there."

"Ay," said Roiseen of the Glen. "That is a picture we all see some days in life, but Time is a good story-teller, Phadraig aroon, and I'll wait the other day when the sun shines for you and the human call comes."

"You are the only human thing, Roiseen," he said, and touched her hair. "You understand."

"How did you tame the sea birds of Danaan, Phadraig, my heart?" she asked, but he shook his head.

"I only spoke to them as I would to Snard—some souls have the gift of taming—that is all."

"Ay, your father had it before you," she said. Then, as he turned into the darkness, she spoke again as she held back the white hound. "Do you look to come back to me here, Phadraig, son of Nihil?"

"I do, Mother of the Glen, though I cannot see clearly the path I may come—or when."

"I thought as much," she said, "but Phadraig, take this from me ere you go: for all ills of youth and life there grows somewhere an herb; find it, Phadraig aroon; search till you find!"

But he went across through the night to the hill of Cromm Cru, singing the song of his father—

O white Danaan of the sea birds,
Danaan of the snowy breast!
O sweet the song on the Druid Path
To lead me to her nest!

She takes my hand at the sea marge,
She whispers low on the wind,
She sets her sail for Tir-nan-Ogue

"Ay," said Roiseen, twirling the spindle,

And leaves dear Life behind!

Then, as a muttering of thunder came on the wind from the sea and a flash of flame cut the gray of the sky, she took the hound within, closing the door on the night, and chanted the song of Nihil, as a prayer, in the dim light of the peat blaze.

Make strong your charms against Danaan,
Danaan of the snowy breast,
Who lured the souls of the Gods of Old
To the land of the mystic west.

The feast of Samhain in that year was a time of wonder, for the yew branches on the old altar place of Cromm Cru were struck afire by the lightning, or so it was said. All the people, fearful of the crashing thunder, yet clasped hands in a circle below the mount, while the man with fire made his way to the top and bent to place it when the stroke came. The blaze from the sky flashed down, and flamed upward again, and the stunned man fell downward among his mates and was borne in fear across the valley, and all knew that night that the vengeance of Cromm Cru of the Tor could be a thing to put the fear of death on any man. Let the churchmen say their say 'neath every bell in Erinn, it would not change any man's mind. And all had known it as a sign of evil to come when the altar of the Ancient People had been defaced.

And there were those, fleeing under the lightning flashes, who vowed they passed Phadraig, son of Nihil, running before the wind with eager gladness in his face, and looking neither to right nor left, and chanting the song of his father as he went down to the sea.

O white Danaan of the sea birds,
Danaan of the snowy breast!

And the white birds were screaming and circling above him in the storm as he sang—

She takes my hand at the sea marge,
She whispers low on the wind,
She sets her sail for Tir-nan-Ogue—

And then a great wave caught the currach he launched and tossed it out on the night, and the white foam made the curtain and hid him from all of life.

AGES on the bosom of the ocean seemed to pass over him after that storm. There was light, and then again there was darkness, but he knew it only through closed eyes in a trance-like dream. He was conscious ever of the whir of wings sweeping over his face and knew the sea birds were there, and then he heard voices, and the laughter of a woman, high and sweet and mocking.

The movement of the boat ceased as it grated on sand. There was a sudden silence, and the sound of running feet.

"But what use to try?" said a sweet, tired voice. "All white things go to Danaan, and look: every bird is white!"

"Danaan comes not out of the forest, and the youth is fair. He is treasure of the sea on our shore; if for her, the birds should have borne him into the lake of the pulsing heart. My hand shall give him to drink."

Then a cup was held to his lips, a drink of sweet-smelling fruits was offered him. He did not drink. He was no longer in a boat, but in a lady's bower where bloom

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was on every bough, and the air heavy with the sweetness of orchards.

"Where am I?" he asked, and out from a shadowy doorway of stone a tall and wondrous woman smiled on him.

"You are in the Summer Land of the Long Day," she said. "The birds of the sea brought you, and what thing do you seek? For your wishing must be great to win your way here."

"I do not know the thing I seek," said Phadraig, whose mind was veiled from the things that had been lived. "I only feel that I shall know again when I find it."

"Then we will wander, a-seeking," said the woman of beauty, and took his hand.

Whereupon, without seeming to take a step, he passed through and was a part of a wonderful people. Their slightest cup was of gold, and many wore crowns at will, and held court and ordered games at which all played merrily, and then the crowns were tossed aside as a part of the game no longer amusing. He moved with his mistress, whose name was Una, along the seashore where pleasure boats were held without rope, and he found himself sitting there alone, wondering how the boats were held together, for there was no iron in them, and that word "iron" was the first word his mind had as a link with the old life and changing skies.

For the skies never changed in the Summer Land of the Long Day, and all the people laughed and played games as if to pass the time while waiting. No one told him for what, and when he asked, Una the beautiful would laugh her sweet mocking laugh and bid him to her bower.

"Other earth lovers have come our way, but none like you," she whispered. "Do you never know you are fairer

than blossom on the bough — or golden fruit of living trees?"

"Whence came your orchards where no one labors?" he asked, and she laughed again.

"They are the fair memory of the sunken world to the south — as is this castle of stone by the water's edge, for what need is there here now for walls of stone?"

"Whose hands made it thus strong here by the sea marge?" he asked, and she took his hand and held it.

"Weary would you fare in this our land if I gave you all the words of that building, for it is ancient as the very earth of which you came. There was no sea at the walls in that day, and the Great White Land of the South was in the midst of waters, and ruled the world. Then the lands broke away and the waters covered it, and only little lands of it kept above the waters or kept the old gods. Your Inis Erinn to the sun side of the world was one, and another one far on the sun-path beyond the waters is one, but the links between have been forgot by the people of Earth. It all lives here because we are the People of Memory. We went out from your Earth Land proudly, letting the body and the soul go that we might hold memory alone, and in that memory we hold only Day and only Summer."

"Ay," said Phadraig, and he sat a long time in the tower looking across the moat where the tides of the sea swirled in, "but in all your games and pleasuring, is it not that memory holds you instead, and makes you as endless slaves to the Great Past? Would it not be rest to forget?"

Upon which she drew away from him and screamed at him to begone, for his earth thoughts were cruel as is the iron of the stranger-people in the heart.

He wandered away from that place, and into a wood — and her cries came after him calling him back, but he could find no gate to the moat and he could not go back.

Gay companions danced about him, and made jeweled crowns for him in the games they played, but he looked at the white birds circling above him, and looked at the sea, and wondered whence they had led him, and at times he could close his eyes and see them circling above the black cliffs of Erinn though he had no memory of that place.

And the day was heavy in the Summer Land for the reason that a quest was in his heart, but the mind kept no record.

But white deer came to a lake in the wood to drink, and after them gay fays with shepherds' staves ; and they danced and sang their songs of the woodland things, and that touched his heart more than the games of crowns and castles.

"Make me a shepherd, too," he said, "for you herd the white things, and the things of white are dear to me."

"Why is that?" asked a maid of the wood.

But he did not know, and they laughed at him because he did not know, and as they laughed, all suddenly Una, gorgeous and jeweled, flashed in their midst and caught at his hand.

"Not yet have you seen her?" she asked. "Then come with me; I weary for your voice."

"I am a shepherd of the wood, and herd the deer."

"The deer need no shepherds; it is only a game to play. Come! I will sing my music and dance you a dance in the woods alone, see! Is the dance not a fair dance?"

"Ay, but I would you could give me the word of why I wander here where this lake wells with the tides of the sea."

"Come! We will hunt in a forest far away. This lake in the wood is a place we never seek."

"Yet the white birds come — and the white deer."

"It is a place where earth life is remembered, and the dread enchantment of night may fall."

"And the stars?" he asked, for all suddenly he thought of the night as a thing dearly beloved and to be desired more than the Ever Day of the changeless sun. The night stars had been dear to him.

"Ay, and the moon and their mistress. Come out of the dusk of the wood!"

"But I hear music of sweetness here!"

"Come, and I will sing beyond sweetness of woman!"

"I listen."

"By this lake of Danaan, I may not sing."

"And that is best," said Phadraig, for out of the rock-wall by the lake, or up from the water, there came the music of dreams on the hill of Cromm Cru, and to an altar of stone by the lake-side came a figure of a maid, and before her and after her swept the white birds of the sea. Her face was veiled as by a cloud circling her to her white feet — and it was the white cloud maid he had visioned in the well where the heart of the sea throbbed as it throbbed here in the lake of the wood.

"Come with me now for pleasure," said Una of the gold crown and jewel eyes.

And he looked deep into her wondrous eyes and read there the shadow things of some forgotten past.

"Somewhere, in some life, your music of Life has held me, and I followed after. Was I lost in some forest through that following, O Woman of the Memory? And do the white birds of the sea lead me at last out from the shadows of that? This pulse of the lake beats more close to me than the pulse of your heart, O Una, most beautiful! And — I follow my dream!"

And at that the white cloud fell away from the maid, and he saw the white hands of her make new fire in the ancient way on the stone of the altar place, and maids and

men in green clasped hands and circled her, and chanted a song he had sometime known of.

Samhain! Samhain! Samhain!
Take the new fire! Send the rain!
Banish care and banish pain!
Speed the ghosts who ban the sheep,
Light the path to spirit sleep!
This our fire to light the way
This eve:
Samhain!

And as he heard them he saw again the hill of Cromm Cru and the circled bands there, but never on Cromm Cru or in all the world had he seen such a priest at an altar, for she was all of white and silver and in her hair of gold was a fillet of silver with a crescent moon. And he broke through the circle to kneel by her.

"O new moon of the world!" said Phadraig as he unclasped the strong hand of Una.

"I hear your voice but may not look on you until the prayer is worked. The Lords of Flame send thus the strength of altars to the sun! 'Tis Summer Days' farewell!"

"The day is endless here — and no farewell!" came the whispered music-sweet voice of Una. "'Tis witchery of Earth, her mother's earth! I beg you come with me!"

But he made no answer, so thrilled was he by the enchantment of the music of the white maid who gave fire to her men and maids, and bade them to the four ways.

Then she turned and smiled upon him, and in her smile was the glory of dawn.

"You have followed the quest, O King Phadraig, soul of Nihil?" she said.

"Not king, O Wonder Maid! You have given back the name I had lost, but no king am I. I am the son of Nihil,

and am your shepherd of the white deer, or knight of yours if fighting men are called."

"Danaan calls no more battles these many thousand days."

And with the name came the strange witchery by which he had been held in thrall since the night of Beltain on the heights.

"Danaan — Danaan!" he whispered. "I have followed the quest. Your white birds led the way, O snowy-breasted maid! I am in bond to you these many days!"

"We all are bound by links forged by the gods. What quest was yours?"

"I never knew till now. I thought it but the music of the past — I sought to find it through your magic name — and now —"

"Ay! Wishful human hearts," she said, and rested her hand on his hair where he knelt beside her. "Come you, and tell me of your life on other shores."

"I have forgotten all," he said, and in truth he had; only flashes of vision came to him as she spoke, but they went again.

She laid her hand on his. "Now look again," she said.

And he looked. And there was the great cliff and the glen by the sea and the sheep on the far moors. And at the door of the cot sat Roiseen spinning the flax, and the white hound at her feet looking out to sea. It was as if he was looking into the eyes of Phadraig, and seeing him, yet taking no note, and Phadraig felt a longing for the shore. He had loved well Roiseen and the hound. And Danaan beside him laughed, and clapped her hands as a child would do.

"I saw it, too!" she said. "And that is the shore my mother loved! Once she made me to see her honey-sweet hills. She died with the sickness of longing for them,

but never could I see it alone. Oh, lend me your eyes, and look for the deep well in the wood in the valley below the altar — it was there he, my father, found her, and drew her from her people. And she trod with him the Druid Path and came from the pulsing well here to the pulsing lake. Did you know that each is a mirror for all that reflects in the other? It is the path of dreams — and the guide is the living sea. It has led you as it led my mother from the land of Inis Erinn."

"And when was this?" asked Phadraig, after he had looked with her into the pulsing well and over the cliffs, and in all the places she had been told of and longed to see.

"I only know it is so long ago that the sea is changed there. For the water ran in where you showed me the sheep in the valley. Ay, always I wanted to see that earth life again, and I wished it till you came to me."

"And I wished for the voice of Danaan out of all the world till my wish met yours somewhere between the shores, and only the sea birds knew!"

She looked at him long, and sighed.

"My mother came for such a wish — and for love, but she could not stay alive with us, and her spirit went out on the wings of the wind to find her way back to the primrose dawns and the purple dusks. How will you go out, O Phadraig the king, when the time comes?"

"Why am I here but to do your will?" he asked. "And since you name me king, then a king's way must I go out when the time comes; but bear you with me I will, Danaan, my soul."

"Ay, if that might be," she said, and played with the girdle of sea pearls about her. "My mother left with me the earth longings else I never had wished you here" — and then she put her hand on his once more and had him look back to the land, and softly she crooned over to her-

self the charms it held for her through the sick longings of the mother. And when he thought of the night there, and the stars circling above and shining in the still water of the well, she arose and paced the grove.

"Look you," she said, "the others who abide with me gave up Earth and Spirit in an ancient day that they might live ever in the strong memory of joys that were. My heritage is different — as my spirit is. They never weary for the dusks of the night; I do, because of the bond with earth in me. Thus I make my own world, and do the moon prayers my mother knew, and make the Festivals of the Age of Youth, and here for love of it I have my night all alone where it gives dread to Una lest I plunge them all in shadow — they are in fear of earth enchantings. You are stronger than I, O Phadraig, for you have the soul of the Danaan and the strong earth body. You have fared forth on the quest of Nihil, though you know it not! But Nihil was not a king and the gods decide, Phadraig, that you are to be that. Wearily one more life must you serve ere you win the right to rest."

"With you, O Danaan?"

"If you will it so, for you are stronger than I, Phadraig."

"What pledge may I keep?"

She gave him the sharp flint spear from the altar.

"Cut there in the wall of the rock something sacred to you and to the land of my mother."

He did so, and cut the central star of the north, and the wheel of the wings of it at the four seasons.

"It is the most steadfast sign in our skies," he said, "and every circling dance of prayer to the gods, old or new, is built on it."

Then Danaan, holding his hand, stood beside him at the edge of the lake of the tide, and with her finger drew a circle around the symbol there.

"The forest will wither, and the heart of the lake will be still, ere the bond of that circle dies for you and for me," she said. "If ever you doubt, O Phadraig the king, fare you forth again from your own shores of Inis Erinn and look on the wall and my pledge here. But never look back to it but once in your lifetime, and now—come away!"

He followed where she led, and in a grotto by the sea they sat with clasped hands and she told him what she might of the People of Memory. Yet often she seemed to tell him without words. The music of a wondrous life swept over him in great floods of light unspeakable, and again he could hear an undercurrent of a lament ever dying away, and coming again, and he felt what that meant, too.

"We will not be parting," he said as he held her. "I say it!"

"That is as may be," she answered. "I am free of the wood and rule there, yet I belong to the Tuathe de Danaan, and there are bonds of this life."

"I broke them to find you," he said.

"So you did. But you have the wonderful earth body, and the doubled strength of Nihil and the others who have longed through the ages to prove the bond they felt. I will be alone. There will be no one to help me."

"I will help," he said.

"You have your will, and you see no content till you try," she said. "But this is the time of trial, and I will not see you linger till your soul goes out on the restless winds crying for the blue of the heather on the hill and the primrose dawns after the sweet nights! It may be a long farewell you are to give me here, Phadraig, O King!"

But he lifted her in his arms as if she had been but an armful of the fragrant blossoms above them, and he strode down to the shore with the white sea birds screaming.

She uttered no word as he placed her in the currach and

set it on the waves, and from the castle walls no face looked out. It was as if all the land there, and her heart as well, had been made quiet by the strength of his will to bear her away.

But only the whispered lament of the music was heard, and the world was very still. The birds had ceased whirling above but swept steadily onward as if drifting on the wind, and it was a world of green water and green sky they went into.

But the cold came down, and the birds flew low. He touched the hand of Danaan; it was very cold, and his heart was sick with fear for her. He lifted her to his breast that his body might give her warmth. But it did not, and his very soul seemed frozen with unearthly cold as he lay beside her and held her close.

And then she smiled, the most wonderful smile in the world, into his eyes, and whispered, " I did not know how it would be coming, Phadraig, O King. But it is the farewell —and it is sweet as honey on the hills in your land of love."

But he could not speak; he could only look on her face until his own eyes closed, and the currach went steadily on through icy air. There was no longer any thought left in him as to where they were borne, for he felt the sleep of death was over them both.

AND on the day of Samhain, as the sun went into the western mists and left a path of glory behind, the white hound at the feet of old Roiseen of the Glen stood up looking out to the sea, and the whine of him was like a chained soul in travail. Roiseen looked the way he

looked, and in the path of the sun on the water a currach came in to the shore, and over it a white cloud hovered. Yet when it came nearer, the cloud was only white birds flying low on the sea.

"The strength of the saints to us—and Saint Brighde to the fore!" she prayed, for no mortal currach ever came in like that against the tide. And to shepherds bearing yew to the mount of Cromm Cru, she made a call.

"Come you who bear cheer to the ghosts who walk on the night of Samhain," she said, "come you down to the sea where the ghost of Phadraig, son of Nihil, is waiting on the waves!"

In fear they came, and, led by the white hound, they went down to the sea, and there was Phadraig in the white sleep. But the hound crept near to him and gave tongue in joy, and Roiseen of the Glen lifted his head to her.

"The luck is on him that he yet holds breath," she said. "Men, take him up. Fiann, make you the fire. Erard, go you for the priest in the cave of the hills, for he is a holy man. Ay! Achone! Phadraig, that you should come back to us with the ice in your blood like this!"

And only the bravest of the men would bear Phadraig, for the others stayed on their knees in fear of the white birds whirling wearily over.

And the night fires of Samhain were sending their flames to the sky when he spoke.

"Danaan, Danaan, it is again I have lost you?"

"He dreams," said the holy man of the cave where Saint Colman had lived his seven blessed years, and ever after that time the monks lived there in retreat.

"Nay, father, call it not a dream, for it is a part of the life of his people—and he has been bold to go forth to find."

And that was the time she told, under confession, the legend of the race of Ua Dinan.

He was very aged, and had seen many things on earth, and in hearts, and he did not chide.

"What is the blaze on the night sky?" asked Phadraig. "Do they burn today the yew wet by the rain last night of Samhain?"

The monk looked at the woman.

"Ay, Phadraig, my heart," she said. "It is the feast fire of Samhain." But she did not tell him he had gone out with the ghosts of Samhain a year agone, and came back with them!

Then there was sound of horses' feet, and voices of men of degree, and a chief of Tormond entered the cot and bent the knee to Phadraig, and beyond the door stood many chiefs.

"We have guarded your claim till you came, Phadraig, son of Nihil, son of Ua Dinan," he said, and the chiefs lifted their lances, and one by one entered the cot and spoke fealty and passed out.

And thus he learned that Danaan spoke true in Tir-nan-Ogue of the Long Day, for Kieran the king had fallen in a raid of the south, and his frail cousin had gone out like a rushlight in the wind.

"Come another day, and I will hearken to you," he said, "other cares await me this night."

They went away at that, and Phadraig asked again for Danaan, and was told that the currach was empty but for himself, and was so old that it fell to pieces as the men drew it ashore, and that not lately could it have ever borne the burden of two bodies.

This he knew was not true, and he said it, and the fever of him ran hot, and he talked of the trees of magic where white flower and fruit of gold grew on the same branch,

and where music was achingly sweet, and spoke without words! Back there to Tir-nan-Ogue would he go for Danaan, despite all, and he bade them as their king that they bring him a boat for the journey!

And so prayerful were the eyes of Roiseen that the holy man of the cave bade him sleep in peace, for with the rising of the sun the boat would be ready.

"Achone! Ay, father! But what shall we do if he wakens alive and holds you to that?" asked Roiseen, making the sign.

"What is there to do with god or man but to keep the faith?" said the priest. "He is not to be bound or held to life for the cares of this land except he be rowed to some island in the sea, and have the dream blown away on the wind."

And it was so.

The chiefs waited on his word while he walked the hills with the priest and listened to the music unheard by all but him, and called on Danaan to come alive to him.

Strange tales went abroad that the king walked with angels, and the chiefs were patient, but to the holy man they said he must wear the crown or forfeit it, also that he must wed with a maid of degree, else no chief could bring wife or daughter to the halls of Ua Dinan, as was the custom in Tormond.

Phadraig, the king, listened and laughed with bitter thoughts.

"How may I wed a warm maid of the clans when my arms are yet chilled with the icy bosom of Danaan?" he asked. "The heart of me craves only a boat, and strength to fare forth to the shores where I held her."

"And if we find a shore and no waiting maids, will you then take up the work waiting here to your hand?"

"That, if I cannot find her," said Phadraig.

"And will you wed the lady who waits in the south, and hold court as of old for the good of your race?"

"Rather with her than another," said Phadraig. "She is a fair and honest lady, and sweetly kind."

And the holy man kept his word. He bore sacred symbols and a church bell, and sailed away with Phadraig to the west, and the chiefs on the shore were told it was a vow, and waited as they might and made prayers. The bells were rung from every tower that day to pray that Phadraig, the king, come again in health and safety.

NO one ever knew what island in the sea they came to, but come to an island they did, and it was far away. The wood grew down to the shore, and there were mighty trees cast down as by a great wind, and the desolation of it was so great that no living thing moved or fluttered a wing, and out beyond the shore rested the white birds of Phadraig, the king, and they rocked on the waves there, and by no effort could be made follow.

"This is the farthest unknown land," said the holy man. "By faith and prayer have we found it, and by the grace of God only shall we ever fare safely home or see again the faces of your clans. Look about you, Phadraig of the Dream, where are the ever-blossoming boughs and the castle of stone with the many towers?"

"Hear you not the music?"

"I hear only the sea wind moaning through the branches of dead trees."

"Smell you not the fragrance of orchards?"

"I smell only the twists of seaweed cast up on the shore," and the priest pushed aside a branch of wild thorns with green leaves reaching out from a gnarled and ancient bole.

But Phadraig caught the thorn branch, and under the scant green leaves was one tiny blossom, white and thick-petaled and with the fragrance of all sweetness of all the orchards in the world.

"See! Of this I told you, and it is alive here!"

"Then it is the sole live thing on the shore, for there is not even fish in this sea."

But Phadraig led him over stones of great size piled high. Broken stone was there covered by sands — and other stone not broken, but squared on the four sides and grown over with lichens and wild vines.

"This is like the place of the tower where the sea tide swept into the moat," he said.

And the holy man went over the stone, and stood on a broken wall. And beyond was a great place of sand piled high where the walls of a moat once stood.

"Come away," he said, and crossed himself in fear. "This is no place of living things. No life has been here for a thousand years."

But Phadraig held the blossom and heard the music of Danaan and would not.

"Come out first, as by your vow, to the forest," he said, "for it was there I found her. Once only in my lifetime I was to come back if I had doubt. I have no doubt, yet I am here with you. Come you in."

It was a wilderness beyond words, and the twisted thorn trees were gray and dead there, with neither green leaf nor white bloom.

"I am sorrowful to bring you through them," said Phadraig, the king, for the priest was old and the way

hard. "But over beyond the hill is the great forest — and there by the blue lake the pulse of the sea is —"

But the forest was a jungle with no path, and the lake was not there; only a bog stretched from the gray wood to a cliff of gray rock, and Phadraig could say no word but sat there on a crumbling stone and covered his eyes with his hands.

"Now, O Phadraig, will you come back to the warm blood of your own clans?" asked the priest. "For here is the end of the dream."

But Phadraig, the lover, stood up and walked to the wall of gray rock at the edge of the bog.

"Not yet — O holy father," he said. "Once only I was to come for proof in one lifetime, and here am I! Come you and look."

He tore away from the rock wall the gray and green lichen and placed his fingers into the carving made there for the star of the north, and its circling seven, which makes both cross and wheel in the night sky.

"See! I drilled them deep as the flint knife would burrow the stone," he said, "and the storm has beaten away the face of the rock until only the traces are here. But Danaan took one finger of her white hand and drew a circle as her bond, and it has eaten deep into the rock as if carved with tools of iron this day. Father, what should that tell to me?"

And the holy man looked in the face of Phadraig, the king, and made a prayer against enchantments, and rang the sacred bell of church there in the gray wood before he would speak.

"Since written bond it is, O Phadraig, rest your soul with the thought that it was a bond with a forbear of yours a thousand summers agone! You have only dreamed the dream that was born in your blood of that bond.

You have kept the tryst for your ancestors, and risked your life and soul in the keeping. No more of duty for your race will be required of you in this life — naught but to wear the crown and rule in the ways of the clans."

So Phadraig knelt there by the written bond of union, to the harmony of the circling stars, and he touched the circle of Danaan while he made his prayer, and then they went out again from the wilderness to the sea, and the white birds flew silently ahead of them on the sun-path to the home land of Erinn.

"Look not behind you," said the priest, "but follow the birds and pray for all lost souls."

For well he knew what would come of the church bell, and the christian prayer in the gray wood. And come it did, for when he looked back the ancient island of enchantment was no more to be seen. And no living man has seen it to this day except its shadow every seven years far across the gold haze of the sunset path, and then the gray wood is glorified and young again — but there are those who can still hear the music of Danaan across the water in dusks and dawns.

AND Roiseen of the Glen went to the great hall of Phadraig, the Ua Dinan, and nursed his children there, and gave comfort to Yva of Kilfernora, who was wife to him, and counseled her never to hedge in a child of the Ua Dinan from the open life and the old faiths; for in strange and dangerous ways they would cross the barriers, and it was safest to let them range free

till they made the circle and came back to bide at the hearthstone and under the bell of the church.

The holy man of the cave of Saint Colman was given merit by the bishop for saving the soul of Phadraig, the king, who was known to have won a strange power through some holy source.

His hair whitened but his eyes were ever young, and his strength and wisdom grew, and his children's children could not keep pace with him on the moors. He trained his eldest son to rule, and when the times were safe, he gave up the crown and wore the monk's robe of white, and crossed over to Dun Aengus of the Isles of Arran. The singers of three centuries sang the songs of Nihil, his father, and the poets wrote of Phadraig, the king, as of a holy man by whom the white birds were tamed. Also he loved the stars and learned wisdom of them in the night, and in the blessed Isle of Arran he was always out under the sky when the wind blew from the west—and the music he heard then made him walk in beauty with the glad eyes of a lover who is beloved.

And when the Time came, he laid him down in the white robe and bade all doors be open, and all windows, that the west wind come over him! And the white birds came on the wind and circled the room and hovered there. While the brother monks lit candles and chanted the words for the dying, he smiled in content and whispered the music of the song of Nihil—

> She takes my hand at the sea marge,
> She whispers low on the wind,
> She sets her sail for Tir-nan-Ogue
> And leaves worn Life behind!

No pain was with him, and no sickness, but he went out on the wind as the birds went, and the monks who knelt

by him, waiting some vision of his patron saint, heard him say at the last:

"Danaan, the star stands steady these thousand years and the circle closes. I come back on the breath of the gods!"

There was much learned discussion over this saying of his. Some thought he spoke of Daniel of the Hebrews, who was never a saint but was once a strong prophet. Others thought it was David, the king, of whom he spoke, for David was once a shepherd — and such were ever wise in the ways of the stars of night.

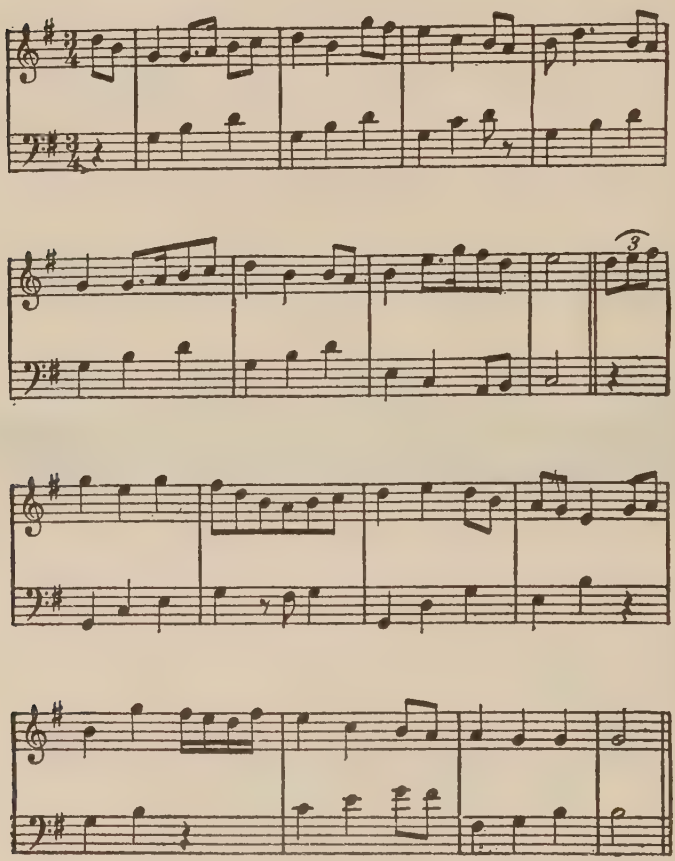
As to the "breath of the gods" — they could by no means make out the meaning of that, which would have been blasphemy had it been said by anyone, high or low, and in their charity the monks united to disbelieve their own ears and content their souls with the miracle of the white birds — which was a beautiful miracle indeed — and, of course, a holy one.

So Phadraig, the king, was buried in consecrated ground, and only two souls had lived in his day to read the riddle of his life. One was the Wise Woman of the Glen and the other a holy man of the cave of Saint Colman in the hills.

But each had passed on, long years before, and made their choice between heaven and Tir-nan-Ogue.

THE ENCHANTING OF DOIRENN

Love's Story



THE ENCHANTING OF DOIRENN

NOT lucky is it for a man when his own clan gives him low looks, and Ruadan of Ardsolais saw how the wind blew in the rath of Fethna in Meath when his kinsmen brought there a counting of cattle, and they grudged that payment of cattle and grudged twice over the twelve white cows, for the white cows were the darlings of the herd, and his kinsmen were coveting them for their own fields. And to Fethna, who was lord of the judgments in that place, they spoke.

"What is this debt to Cairell?" asked Donn, of his clan. "Far from Deasmond is the dun of Cairell; far to drive cattle, and waste of time coming."

Fethna would have been a cloak for Ruadan had he dared, but justice must have light of the sun.

"It is no debt, and I could wish you made me no asking," he said. "It is a fine, and it had to be paid when Cairell brought witness and made oath."

"Why not give to them the tale?" asked Ruadan, and laughed. "If Cairell and his wife Luaine care so little to have songs of us going round the fire, what is it to me? Luaine of the white hands can be queen of cattle for all I am caring. That is the comfortable kind of wife to have for old age, and she is a fair, sweet body."

"It would serve you better," said Donn, of his clan,

"to take a wife of your own, that your kinsmen could bring their women folk to your dun, as is fitting. Neither monk's robe nor wife will you take or will you keep."

"I am not yet brave enough in spirit to pledge my name for every man's child a woman may take fancy to bring; it takes a brave man for that. Until I find the right woman it is cheaper to pay trespass in cattle."

"You talk heresy ; for marriage is called sanctified."

"So the priests are telling, but it takes more than their words to prove it so. Make not your quarrel here, because there is no wife in my dun, when all these coveted cattle are paid by me because there was a wife in my camp in the forest — ill-luck on that night!"

His kinsmen stared darkly, feeling they were laughed at, but Fethna spoke.

"It is the truth: the woman followed him, he makes no denial."

"What good of it?" laughed Ruadan. "I left his dun and asked no company. Every jester in Erinn would have a song of me if I took flight from the same woman twice. And where would there be profit in it to anyone?"

"There would be profit in that you would not lose the love of Niall, the king," said Fethna sorrowful, and Donn changed looks with the others.

"True enough," agreed Ruadan, "but if Niall was pleased to give me love himself, why should he be in anger for the reason that his uncle's cousin's daughter should have followed after to do the same? How was I to know? Does a man waste time to ask about grandsires when a lovely woman would creep under his cloak? Out on you for a lot of cold-blooded fish! Niall Caille will show tem-

per for a year perhaps, and I'll be keeping my distance till he has need of a spear."

"Is the favor of a king so small a matter that you pick it up and put it aside as you will?" asked Donn jealously. "Strange tales have come to us of other heads with crowns and other friendships of yours."

Ruadan looked at his hand on which a foreign ring shone—a ring of deep gold and a red jewel in it.

"Rest you easy on that. There will be no cattle to pay there! I was on the business of the king; and the jewel was given only to the king's messenger."

"Ask of Niall another gille next time," said Fethna, "for the last one had tales to tell of Queen Ota and that ring of yours! Turgesius of the Danes needs two eyes for her alone. Since kings and queens do not come to me to set fines for loves, I can laugh at that, and leave it to Niall. But the bards do be making songs of that and even the maids are singing them in their chamber."

Back of the arras there was a movement and a scuttling of feet; maids were there listening because the drive of cattle had made talk.

Bevind, daughter of Fethna, was there, and held by the hand Doirenn, of the deep voice, to listen.

"Do you have wonder that I give him my looks when queens have given him love?" she asked, but the girl Doirenn looked her gloom and her scorn.

"How is it that you give looks to him whom they call 'God's Dastard' when your eyes have looked on goodness in Geroid who has no blemish?" she asked. "This man has much blemish, and is not in shame because of it."

"You are as hard on him as the monks, for it was the monks that put that name on him. It is heavy to carry, Doirenn. To put an ill name to a boy and hope he walks the white path is much to hope for, Doirenn."

Doirenn looked at her, frowning.

"I have not seen his face, yet I am thinking ill of him," she said. "Geroid would have no light word of women and cattle such as this man speaks. Give him no looks, Bevind, and no words. It is said that monks learn holy ghostly things, and, if turned dastard to God, they can use power for enchantments. If a queen, even a pagan queen, looked love on him, and a king's cousin followed him, what can it mean but enchantings?"

Bevind gasped and rolled her eyes.

"I did hear old Aillve tell a tale or enchantment by love, and the man was old as the world, yet looked young, and he snared maids and took them to his rath where they were changed to white cats. His forest was ful of beautiful white cats, waiting for a brave and pure youth to ride their way and make prayers there; and that would free them, and nothing else would free them."

"Geroid could be that one," said Doirenn. "All his verses on the tablets are against enchantments in these days. Here is one—

Against incantations of false prophets,
Against craft of idolatry, against spells
Of women, and smiths, and druids, I bind
Myself to the strong strength.

The prayer of a saint is that prayer, Bevind, and with it he could ride safe to free all enchanted souls."

"But would he?" asked Bevind. "He is my kinsman more than yours, and the safe side of a good wall was ever the choice of Geroid when the play was getting rough. My brothers are wild to fight out the Danes when the time comes, but Geroid casts no spear for that practice."

Doirenn sulked and frowned.

"Your brothers have not souls of religion," she said, "they have jealous hearts because of the high words of Geroid."

"They have jealous hearts because of your own beauteous eyes, and because not one of them would shut himself away with the monks, and feed a maid like yourself on letters and on the prayers of the old-time saints, and that is what Geroid is doing to you."

"The tongue of you is bitter from some poison herb you have chewed on," declared Doirenn, "you have no good word for the godly, but many good words for that swaggering lover of queens and other men's wives. The more shame to you!"

Bevind laughed again. "Alanna," she said, "he has no love, else he would have kept Luaine who followed his road. He would be fighting for her and not paying cattle for her — no — Ruadan of Ardsolais has not yet found Love, he has only found many fond women. Achone! That I was promised in troth before I was seeing him, for his kinsmen are saying it is a wife he should have, far away there, back of beyond where his dun is in the mountains."

BUT Doirenn cared not where he lived, nor when he wived. She carried the last tablet of Geroid out through the arbor where she could read over again and again the written words of the lad who was dear and was far. She unbraided the red gold of her hair, and let it fall about her as a shimmering curtain. She had days in that six-

teenth year of hers when the veil of a nun would have seemed to her a sweet thing to wear in sanctuary, but the cutting of that golden shower was a thing to shrink from; and the thought of Geroid was another reason!

IT was there in the arbor Ruadan saw her, while his kinsmen fed and Fethna did a host's duty.

At first he could see little but the glory of her hair and the bare feet under the striped skirt of white and brown. He was above her on the wall, and stood waiting some movement that her face might be uncovered.

Fethna found him thus, for she had not moved and he had watched her long.

"Who is that?" he asked, "or do I dream of magical gold in the shape of a maid?"

"It is Doirenn, daughter of no man now, for Marvan that was her father, and all his household, were swept into death by the men of Lochlann, and the gold of her hair is all the dower the child brings."

"What does she there?"

"She is devoted these days because a queer twist of a lad is devoted, and hours she reads the prayers he is sending on tablets. It is a game of young years and is on the love path. She grows tall and nearing time to wed."

"And she reads the writings?"

"She does, and who wants a cleric in a wife? Marvan taught her as a scribe ere he went the way — cows and slaves would be a better portion."

"I do not say that," said Ruadan. "Ten years I worked

on letters alone in Cluain-mac-noise and books I made were gifts to kings. There is a joy in that. If in this life I found no house, I may go back to the pen and color pot after I have covered my circle."

Then the voice of Bevind called from somewhere, and Doirenn stood up and shook back her golden mane.

"She has dower in plenty," said Ruadan.

He listened to her voice and remembered its deep music, and he rode west with his kinsmen, who planted his fields and counted his herds.

A MONTH went by, and again he stood at the gate of Fethna.

"Does that maid know me, Ruadan, from Donn or the others of my clan?" he asked, and Fethna looked at him and laughed loud.

"The last time it was a cattle-fine for a wife you paid, and now you are coming to ask of a maid and no name to her!"

"There is only one in the world," said Ruadan. "She is Doirenn na Marvan, and I would have speech with her."

"Sorrow the day," lamented Fethna, "it is not now you would be seeing that one; grief of the world is on her, for Geroid who was her lover has gone into the 'Solitary'—far west has he gone down the Sionan to the ancient cell of Saint Senan on the shores of Lough Dearg. She thinks the sorrow of the world is hers."

"I would lift that load and carry it," said Ruadan.

"You mean to take her to wed?" and Fethna's face had

a frown on it. It was not easy to shift the sails for every wind with Ruadan.

"It would mean war with me, or a race beyond me to the man who would offer her less," he said.

But for all the urging of Bevind, Doirenn would not come where he was. She said he was the contrary in all ways to the pious youth who had her heart. If she loved Geroid, there could be only hate in her thoughts for one so near to the evil one as "God's Dastard" was said and was sung.

"She has not seen me," said Ruadan when her refusal came. "Let her see me and hear me, and let my own ears hear her words."

It was not a pleasant day of joy for Fethna and the family of Fethna. His own sons were asking the same thing, and the girl had only one thought, and that was not of marriage.

But after much argument Doirenn put aside Bevind and walked alone into the great hall where Ruadan — God's Dastard and the darling of fond women — waited.

White she was, and afraid, but the fear only made darker the blue eyes of her. Her hair was braided in long strands over each shoulder. Bevind had dressed her in white and the broidered shoes of skin were white. She was more lovely than a queen of the Danaan in the ancient legends.

But she stood, a pale, proud, frightened child in her loveliness, and she looked past Ruadan and not at him.

"I came by the courtesy of Fethna," she said. "I do not come by my wish."

Ruadan looked at her and saw the fluttering of the white throat and the tight clenching of her hand. She looked like a bird trapped.

"And I come despite my wish to go elsewhere," he

said grimly. "Child, I saw you once in the arbor and I shall not be forgetting the seeing of you. I meant not to see you again, but a dream came to me in the forest and it brought me to you, for you were in it."

She looked at him then and looked away proudly.

"Your dream was false," she said. "It should have been of Luaine who claimed your cattle, or Ota the queen, whose love gift you wear."

"By the Elements," he began darkly, but she put out her hand.

"I have no desire for speech with unholy men," she said. "Priest and monk say you are that, and they have a name for it! They tell me you speak marriage for me, but I have a choice: If Geroid goes into sanctuary I also will go; I am going. The veiled women of Cluain-mac-noise will take me without dower. Your dream in the forest has no meaning to a veiled maid."

"It will have in another time," he said in patience, for her voice had the sound of tears, and it made a strange ache in his heart. "I dreamed that you were in sorrow and that I was to offer you shelter. I did not know your sorrow but I turned and rode back to learn. From Fethna I learned."

"It is not your sorrow," said Doirenn.

"It may be, and we may live to know it," Ruadan made answer, and strove to gentle his voice to her sadness, "for I dreamed I saw you in a very different place — away to the west and in hills I know and by a shore you never have seen."

"The west!" she whispered. "Geroid is there now, a stone cell in the mountains of the west!"

"I did not see the cell. I saw you there at a shore I know, and Bronach the Lamentable was there — the wraith washing the shrouds of mortals. I woke in the night with

that dream, and turned in the night to take the road here. To the people of my house Bronach does not come for naught. You were in that dream, it means a bond with our house, and I am here to keep that bond, and offer what I may."

Doirenn, by the arras, called Bevind and her father.

"You told me of enchantments men make on maids when of evil mind," she said. "The power Ruadan learned as a monk he would turn to much usage today. Was it by tales of dreams you witched the ring from a queen's hand? And witched the Lady Luaine to the forest?"

And then she laughed and went out and left them there. But when Bevind found her in her chamber she was weeping bitterly and would not tell them of the dream or the enchantment.

And within seven days Fethna was glad of heart to take her to Cluain-mac-noise for the year of preparing a soul for the veil. Between her weeping for Geroid, and the raging of his own sons there was no peace for a quiet man in his own house.

Thus it was that the golden tresses of Doirenn were covered by the white novice veil and she began life anew in the great school by the Sionan, famed for its learning from Gaul even to Egypt.

BUT the year of her preparation had not ended when Ruadan again rode to the dun of Fethna. He was hollow of eye, and his spent horses were glad of rest and fodder.

"Is there aught of Doirenn na Marvan known to you?"

he asked, and the sons of Fethna, who had taken wives and forgotten the golden maid who had flouted them, looked at Ruadan and laughed.

"How is a man to know of a veiled maid?" one asked. "The walls are high and the fair ones are well guarded."

"I was on the south shores and I heard her voice; it was her voice, there is none other like that. It was her voice calling—a troubled voice."

"How could you hear a voice from the center of Erinn to the south shore?" they said, but Fethna looked in the fierce face of Ruadan and bade them be silent.

"Your father Ferdiad had 'the sight,'" he said, "but my thought has been that it did not come to you because the priests were down on you. They can take away power if they think of it! What is it you would do because of that calling?"

"I would answer it," said Ruadan. "No gate of a nun's dwelling would open for me, but you have women about you. Take one and make a gift, and let me ride beside you. The call was coming to me and the gift I will provide. I will pledge them a book more fine than the one of my youth made for the abbot's gift to Clonard. My hand has not lost its craft—I vow this thing!"

There was much talk of which wife would go, and the dress to wear, and to carry, for Bevind had wed and gone north to Orielle. Also the best horses were to bring in, and food to prepare. Hours were wasted ere they started on the way.

They would have been as well not starting, for soon they met people in fright and with awesome news.

While Turgesius harried the south shore and strengthened the Danish holdings there, Queen Ota, the pagan priestess of terrible things, had won to the heart of Erinn by the Sionan. She and her brother, Amlaf, had a fleet on

Lough Rea and Lough Boderg. A fort of theirs was over at Rinnduin and the lands were ravaged by them. A battle at Cluain-mac-noise had won the churches and monasteries for the queen. Monks and nuns were killed, and there was much burning of all houses of farmers or herders. Not a handful of thatch was left on a house for miles, and runners had been killed with spear and with arrow.

It was too late for help. The warriors of Queen Ota were on the walls and in the towers of Cluain-mac-noise. They held the Sionan to north and south. It was not for nothing that the great night-sun with the tail of fire swept like a besom over the skies of Erinn that year. The young had fear on them, and the old went in secret ways to the high places of ancient druidcraft and made answering fires that help might come their way if the way of the saints failed them. Though bishop thundered from the altar, and monk prayed in the cell, yet fires did blaze where the temples of ancient faiths remained, but no prayer and no spell swept away Ota and her mate — or swept away that fiery trailing thing among the stars!

There were those who called it the war warning of the Dane, and the worst of all the evils it announced was the sacking of Cluain-mac-noise, because great wealth of jeweled books and costly gifts was centered in that place.

"WHAT of Doirenn who was fosterling of Fethna?" asked Ruadan of the fleeing host.

"No one is knowing that. Ota likes not women about her except for labor to save her men. The young and strong may be taken overseas as slaves — no one can know

that. West to the sea along the Sionan Ota has her swift oarmen as couriers to bring quick warnings, and a fort is there at Luimneach for all supplies, cattle and horses are held for her, and the people of the land only live by her mercy to harvest their own crops for her warriors. It is a sad time under the dreadful star for the people of Erinn."

RUADAN looked about the little huddled group, pale with horror of what had been, and in further dread of what might be: with one army of the foreigner on the south shore, and one in the very heart of the land, and the fearful star of danger sweeping the heavens! He took Fethna aside, and when they were alone he spoke as follows:

"Go you back. This is not the game of an old man. Bid your sons keep silence as to the call I heard; I had too much of hill and valley to cover and have come too late. I will take my gille and go a day's ride farther. I may learn somewhat."

"It is better not to go, and not to know," said Fethna. "When I was younger than you they stole the maid I was to wed; their ships sailed out to sea and no word was ever coming back. What is there to do for one man against an army? What is there for you to do at Cluain-mac-noise? We can gather men and fight them out, but it will take time. While we are getting our clans and arms together they will have ravaged the land and sailed away."

"That is true," said Ruadan. "Send your couriers to

every point while I go on and see as I may. I will be back for a spear when the time comes, rest you easy on that."

SO, with his servant, he went on in deep thought and silence, striving to find ways to answer that call of Doirenn, who held him in bitter disdain.

When half-mad wanderers were met, fleeing from the Danish scourge, and smoking ruins were seen afar, Ruadan halted in a grove of little oaks and washed in the stream and took more sightly apparel from the bag carried on the horse of the servant. A purple cloak from overseas he put on, and from the lining of a girdle he took a golden ring with a great red jewel of beauty, and set it on his hand.

"From here you take the back road," he said to his servant, "and if you would favor me, and the house in which your family had protection of spears, this is the time for the favor."

"Tell it and it is done," said the man.

"There may be half-Dane spies among these fleeing people. When they ask of me tell them I have made quarrel with my clan, and that the monks call me 'God's Dastard' for putting off the robe and letting my hair grow as God meant it to."

"It is a hard thing you are asking," said the servant, "for it is myself has had many a fight to deny your unfaith."

"I know that without words else I would not be trusting you. Say what you can to let them think I have cast

off my own people to follow Queen Ota and her fortunes. There will be no need to say it to them, they will say it for you if they are given the hint. They will call me 'pagan' because I follow a pagan queen. And you can be sad and of downcast countenance, and say a prayer against evil for me. Never fear it will get to Ota herself before you get to your home."

"And where will I be waiting for you, Ruadan?"

"In paradise, man, and good luck to you on the way! Go you back to Ardsolais. Tend the herds and wait what comes. It is not with chance our life is."

THEN he mounted his horse and when his servant looked downcast at the parting, Ruadan tried to cheer him, and sang words of the hymn of Saint Colum for a journey.

It is alone I am on the mountain,
O King Sun of the lucky road!
There is nothing to fear on that road!

If I had three score hundreds of armies
To defend the body
When the day of my death comes
There is no strong place to hold out against it.

Whatever God has settled for a mortal
He will not leave the world until he meets it,
Although a high head goes looking for more
He will not get the size of a grain of it!

He that is spent may find death in a church
Or on an island of a lake he may find it;
He that has luck to his way
His life will be safe in the front of a battle!

It is alone I am in a wilderness,
O King Sun of the lucky road!
There is nothing to fear on that road!

QUEEN OTA, wife of Ragnor who was called Thor's servant, Thorgille — "Turgesius" by the christian land — was a thing of strange beauty in her first sailings with the fleets. Flaxen straight hair of a child was hers — silken straight. Her face had a slim whiteness, and her eyes of amber were the eyes of a white cat. Men had fought and slain each other for love of her red mouth and her round breasts. Her raids were more fierce than the raids of Turgesius or Amlaf, her brother, for no chief but knew that valor might win for him more than his share of the spoil if his deeds were worthy her smile.

But many sailings had been hers and much profit from Erinn, and none had been greater in one place than the spoils of Cluain-mac-noise, in the year of the Great Star, for princes of Gaul and Alba sent their sons to Cluain-mac-noise and had sent rich gifts with the sons, until the wealth at the great place of learning on the Sionan had become the wealth of kings.

All that wealth of gold and silver vessels and jeweled censor chains, and crosses of golden wonder, were heaped on the floor of the strongest of the stone towers. With them were heaped the dreaded magic altar-books of Erinn, in jeweled cases. Neither church bell nor church cross was feared by the pagans of the north seas as the mystic writings of the books were feared — it was dark magic to them, and to be burned or drowned or buried on every raid.

And Ota, wearied after the battle and sick of the smell of old blood — though the red of it fresh flowing from her opponents was sweet to her as red berries ripening for her in a garden — went within the dwelling from which Ronan, the abbot, had been dragged by her men. On a couch of furs over which broidered silk of altars had been spread, she rested herself and spoke wearily.

"Let none enter here until my rest is come to me," she said, and the wife of Amlaf, whose name was Gurtha, looked at her in wonder that she would confess to need of rest, for the hatred of growing age was with Ota always.

"But Barolf, chief of your spear men, has been twice here for speech," said Gurtha.

"I am wearied of Barolf. When he comes tell him I take it ill that he troubles me today."

But a man stood in the doorway, broad of shoulder, his yellow hair reaching down to his gold-banded arms.

"O Queen, how has Barolf wearied you?"

She looked at him and the amber eyes narrowed to golden slits under the silken flax of her hair. He was a favorite of a year gone, who was daring much! He waited with folded arms — and Gurtha was watching!

"Yours was the word to the men to burn the bodies where winds brought stench to me, which is weariness enough," she said. "I am badly served when Ragnor is south and Amlaf in the north."

"Was it ill service when my men mowed down for you the clerics and guard of this place, and brought the wealth of it to your feet?" he asked. "No man of the blood of the queen has done her more service than that."

The queen looked at Gurtha who frowned darkly. Well she knew that Amlaf, her man, should be first of the chiefs, yet because of his own nature, was not. His sister, the queen, was the greater warrior.

"Another time we will speak of the men of my blood," said Ota, "but this day of weariness it is enough to say that fires of the dead must not be built in these days of summer. Illness is on me from that burning. Your men are strong to dig the earth. Let them dig."

"It will be done," said Barolf, "for the hounds are now full." He looked toward Gurtha, and his look spoke hope that she be sent away, but Ota the queen chose not to see the look.

"That is well," she said.

"And the division of the spoils, O Queen?"

"The time for that will be when Amlaf is with us for the counting."

"And that other in the tower," he began, but she made him secret sign for silence, and he spoke no more.

"When Amlaf is with us I will give you a feast and we will speak of all the things," she said with less coldness, and at that there was nothing to do but go.

"He is not of quiet mind," said Gurtha darkly, and Ota laughed.

"This victory makes him look long for the death of Ragnor, and his crown perhaps," she said. "He forgets I have a brother to rule beside me in need."

"Yet he was high in your favor with the coming of May," said Gurtha.

"What of that? Springtime and summer bring different hunger. I am tired of huge white bodies and blue eyes, I would rest myself with other color."

"You had that other color on the south shore a year ago, and Ragnor had a knife ready," warned Gurtha.

"You lie. The man never was with me alone. But there was none like him! Wine-brown were his eyes, and his curls were shadows of night to nestle in."

"He has no kingdom, and no army to fight for a queen

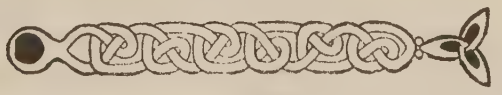
if he chose one," said Gurtha. "He is only a noble of Deasmond who was once a monk in this place."

"In this place? That would be strange if it be true, but he looked not a monk to me."

"No. He was rebellious and cast off the robe, for some anger. They call him a name of their own — it means outlaw to their gods."

"And I let him go, not knowing that!" said Ota. "I would I had the year back — he should not go!"

Gurtha went out and left her regretful over a year of coveted love with one man, after the many years of love with the men she had grown tired of.



A DAY went by and the spoils were not divided. She carried the key of the treasure tower at her girdle, and walked among the ruins her fierce sea-wolves had made, and thought of wine-brown eyes and the searching smile of a man who had as a youth lived there by the Sionan in sanctuary.

Kings and warriors had given her wealth of love and wealth of tribute but the love of an anchorite was a new thought. It charmed her as the song of a bird of spring after the nuts are ripe and the ferns past their greening. In a cell of stone she saw one white robe untouched by ruin, and bade it be sent to the palace of the abbot, now her place of rule.

She laughed with it beside her on the couch of rich robes and silken broideries, and closed her eyes to fancy wine-brown eyes beside her.

Then the impossible chanced to her, and gave her strange

belief in her own powers in which her devotees believed, and in the power of the strange trailing star, called "the star of the Danes" in Erinn.

FOR a runner from the south hills came to her with strange word, and she put secrecy on him, and told Barolf and told Gurtha that a strong ally of the nobles of the Irish was coming to swear fealty, and help in the conquest. One would bring two, and in time all Erinn would be ruled from the center by the children of Thor.

Barolf secretly mocked, but the other men did not mock, for they had fought the Irish and would rather have them as comrades than as enemies.

"Strain not your eyes looking," Barolf laughed, and went up the river to the fort there of Rinnduin.

For all that, they did climb on the walls, and did look toward the hills of Meath, and when afar they saw one horseman who rode steadily and without fear, their wonder was great, for he was tall and handsome and dark Irish, and no other Irish in that day was seeking alone any fort of the Danes.

"Tell the stranger Ota sees no man of Erinn who comes without gauge," said the queen, but she laughed and the robe she put on her was a robe of richness as if to greet a king of great armies.

"O Queen, the man brings a gauge, and his word is that it was a key of all gates when you wore it."

"That is true," said Ota, and looked at the ring he sent. "Give it to his hand in courtesy and lead him to me. It is still a key to all gates for Earl Ruadan."

Ruadan walked between lines of men with lifted spears until he reached her portal. Two of the elder chiefs entered with him, and Gurtha was there watching.

"I come without bard to chant your praises or my wishes," said Ruadan. "I come without men-at-arms or wealth or cattle. I bear no shield for battle, though I will take one at your hands. My own clan put shadow on my name because I cast off the robe of a monk. The priests add their word to my blame, and I will take service with you, Queen Ota of the ships, or I will go over to Gaul and fight there if you have no spear or no shield as a gift."

Ota looked on her head men, and saw that the words pleased them.

"We will talk of that gift," she said, and her smile was level and steady while the head men were there, and Gurtha was there.

BUT when they were gone, it was not a gift of shield or spear she would give Ruadan for the enchantings of his wine-brown eyes. Ota had been Queen of Love always, and gave royally.

"I brought you — I brought you here!" she whispered. "For a year I have wished it — and at last you have come to me! You shall be chief instead of Barolf who grows jealous. A knife from you to him in the dark and you shall head his fleet."

"Give me the knife," said Ruadan.

She laughed and kissed him.

"So keen are you? O wine-brown eyes! O dark man of

the red mouth! Shields and spears are in that corner, and tomorrow we will make choice. Tomorrow you shall see the spoils of our raid and choose a jewel gift from me."

"But the man who stands in my way to you?"

"He is gone north in a boat at dawn and no one stands in your way to me. When he comes again, and Amlaf, my brother, comes, we divide the spoil, but this night is ours and tomorrow night may be ours. See? I hold a monk's robe here in memory of you, and dreamed of dark eyes and kisses, and through the wilderness you brought them!"

Gurtha lied for the queen to the men, but the men laughed, and knew. They were told that Ota promised a wine feast of welcome to the Irish earl, and that gladdened them, for they would get their share, and the wine of the cloisters was good.

THERE was starlight and it pleased Ota to walk with Ruadan in the night. And the cell where he had once slept was where she would go. It was whole and in no ways injured. She kissed him there, and asked of his dreams there, and of the Lady Luaine and the song made of him a year agone — all things heard of him had been remembered by her.

But he laughed and wound her long cloak of silk about her lest the river-damp do her hurt, and would not tell her the things she asked.

"What difference does her beauty make when I left all others to follow you?" he asked. "There is only one queen."

The men on the walls saw them and made jests, for the trailing star left no darkness anywhere. None watched too closely; for their outposts were many and there was no enemy near for an uprising.

"Tomorrow we look at the spoils in that tower there," she said. "I would that Barolf be the one to tear the jeweled covers from the mystic book of Christ's men before the books are burned. There is evil magic in them, and I want no black enchantment from them. We will have Barolf live long enough for that work of danger. But go he must. He has wish for the place of Amlaf, my brother, and it is making troubles."

RUADAN looked up at the tower where a white face moved at the narrow slit in the stone wall — the face did not reach the height of a man.

"You have a guard there besides the key at your girdle?" he asked, and she pressed his arm quickly.

"Speak not of that before Gurtha," she whispered. "It is a young thing with a golden mane I am hiding for Amlaf. There is no other place to keep her from the men, and from Gurtha's knife. Amlaf sulked because of a girl he lost in his last raid — I need his help to get Barolf out of my path, and the girl is a fair bribe. I dare not send her to him. When he comes he can hide her in a boat and take her to the north if she pleases him. If she please him not, she can go with the others."

"And that is — where?"

"I never ask about women unless I need them. There was a convent across the raised road, but I see no women

there now, and hear none." Then she held his arm with both her hands, and looked up at him in the dusk and laughed shortly. "The other men may follow their will in a raiding, and take their women as they choose, but *you* must take no maid to wife!"

THE sun was high in the morning when Ota the queen took her serving-man, who was her slave, and her new guest, of the Irish, to the tower of the spoils. The serving-man carried a dish of food and told Gurtha it was for a hound with a litter of wolf pups, but he did not pass the tower with the food.

The outer door was unbarred, and the inner door unlocked with the queen's key; a ladder was there, and the queen was helped up by Ruadan, his arm circling her for safety. The slave sent up the dish of food in a basket by a rope of grape vine.

"There are ladders above and floors above, but the upper door is chained now because of the red bird caged here for Amlaf," said the queen.

By the narrow slit of the embrasure a girl stood as far from the opened door as she could get. She was flattened against the stones of the wall in terror, and clasped to her was a flat golden-brown book, and the gold of its cover was set with amber disks, and pearls of the sea.

Ruadan of Ardsolais knew that book, for his own hand had wrought it and it was the writings of Mark the Saint, and the chapter in it was that of the sermon of the sea, and the great faith when the storm of the sea obeyed the Voice.

The Abbot Ronan had asked it as a gift for Clonard,

but Clonard had been sacked, and he saw again his lost handiwork.

In a corner were many other books — great piles of vellum in their rich casings. And on and around them were chains of gold, and necklets of gems, woven armlets, and silver sandals, silver trappings of chariots and war horses were stacked with the rest, and women's jewels in girdle or torque, or ring, beyond belief. The sun struck on the heap through an embrasure and set it all aglitter against the gray stone of the wall.

"It speaks a brave hosting," said Ruadan, and lifted the jeweled shrine in which a tiny bell of holiness tinkled. He never looked at the girl.

"I will take all the bells for the decking of our steeds when I ride the forests with you," said Ota the queen.

"Nay, it will not be bells we will care to carry," said Ruadan, and she laughed, well content, and emptied a leathern bag of altar jewels on the stone floor. A golden bell and a jeweled chalice were there, and a wondrous monstrance of gold all aglitter with ruby and amber and pale pearls. A censor of jeweled chains was there, and armlets and necklets thrust in among the vessels of holy use. Ota lifted from them a gorgeous necklet set with smoldering rubies.

"This has been gift of some king of the far world," she said, "and it goes well with the ring you had from me a year ago. I have brought you to choose a gift; choose the richest you can carry."

"My thought is that I could carry you if your long cloak would not tangle my feet on the ladder."

She laughed at that, and clasped the necklet on him and loosened the lacing of his garment that it might be hidden next his skin. Then she glanced at Doirenn, rigid and white against the wall.

"Look at her face," she said laughing. "If she has

looks of such scorn at Amlaf he will not risk the knife of Gurtha for her!"

"So good a sister should make a good wife," said Ruadan; "few women would pick so much of beauty in a slave — unless for sale."

"Yes, I am good to my men," agreed Ota. "They are strange children. They can be starved, and wounded, and beaten, but if they get their toys at the end of the raid their songs are only victory. Yet —" and she looked at Doirenn in thought and then turned to Ruadan, "think not because I would give such gift to a brother, or a husband, that I would allow one to a lover! So choose your gift from the spoils of kings, O Ruadan!"

HE laughed with her and fastened a great gold brooch in her sweeping cloak.

"My choice is only a jewel for your wearing," he said. "Are you ready to go down?"

"I do not know," said Ota the queen. "Why is that girl staring hate at us? Ruadan, I like it not. She holds that book of the altar magic and it may be she works a spell! Ruadan, could it be?" And she clung to him and stared at the hate in the eyes of Doirenn. "Why do you look frozen? You have life left you, and food and shelter. You were not counted among the women for whom lots were drawn. What rage is then yours?"

"The grief is mine that in all that heap of jeweled sacrilege there is no thing of flint or of iron with edge for a maid of Erinn," said Doirenn, and from the safe shelter of the arms of Ruadan, Ota gained courage again.

"A knife might be there," she ventured. "You have no task all these days but to search among this wealth of beauties until Amlaf comes and finds your beauty."

"There is no knife else only my body would be here for your mockings this day," said Doirenn.

"Your caged bird of beauty croaks like a battle crow," said Ruadan and laughed. "There are friendlier places than this place. Come, O Queen!"

"But that book she clasps? It is a thing for fear and why should she covet that when these jewels are in her reach? Art sure it could be no spell she works against us?"

"No, it could not be. What does a stripling maid like that know of books? I risk your gift in wager that she knows not the readings. Give me the book."

Doirenn did not give it to him, but she shrank against the wall as he approached and let go of it. He turned the leaves and looked at her in scorn.

"There—" he said, and thrust it again into her hand. He took her other hand roughly and placed her finger on certain lines of the open page. "There, O young nun of the books, read me that!"

But she only looked at him in horror.

"God's worst dastard—you!" she said.

"What does she mean?" asked Ota. "I need not save her for Amlaf. I can send her to the men if she does you ill. Was that a curse?"

"No curse: it is only a name the monks called me when I learned I was not fit for endless pen work, and endless prayers. Come! The wild thing will not eat while she has us to stare at."

With tenderness he helped the queen down the wooden ladder and drew into place the stone slab of the floor.

Doirenn gazed after him, wide-eyed, hopeless. He did not turn one look toward her.

Her hand was still on the page where he had thrust it so roughly, and her eyes rested there, and then she sank down among the jeweled trophies and stared incredulous.

For there in beauty equal to the jewels about her were the words—"*Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?*"

THE wine feast of Queen Ota was a victory feast for all. Gurtha was angered that it was given before Amlaf returned; neither had Barolf come. Early she went to her sleep, and said in going that if word should reach the ears of Ragnor that it was a wedding feast, she wanted not to be dragged forward for question!

But Ragnor was far to the south, the wine of the monastery was old and was good, and Ota left the filling of her cup to Ruadan of Ardsolais of the far mountains.

She whispered that his eyes worked magic without the brimming cup of gold he offered her, but he kissed the cup, and she emptied it, and talked her dreams of empire—and other dreams.

When the feast was ended he broke jewels from the necklet to give her women as bribe, and himself bore the queen to her silken couch, and rested beside her until all was silence, and the last reveller of the night sunk in sleep.

When the deep hour of the night had come, he took the key from the girdle of the queen—the cloak of hers, and the veil she wore in the sun, a dagger and a shield and spear he took from the place of arms, and the shoes of the queen he took.

He listened to her breathing, and drew the dagger from its sheath. He knew the right thing to do, for one dagger thrust was small payment for the nuns of Cluain-mac-noise — but he thought of Doirenn and halted.

With the queen living there could be only a jealous rage and a brief search for him and for the maid. But with the queen dead by his hand, there would be Thorgille and Amlaf and Barolf on the trail, and all her devoted men with hate for him and vengeance on the maid. Erinn might not be big enough to hide her in. Even from his own kinsmen he might get only curses and hounds on his track when they learned he had stolen away a maid of the cloisters. Another man might be given good thoughts for such stealing, but not Ruadan who had paid eric to Cairell, and had worn love gift of Ota.

To no dun of a friend could he take her, else that house would be stormed and the place left waste. There was nothing for it but the caves of the hills until the fleet of Ota was gone from the waters of the Sionan.

He thought of old forgotten sanctuaries of the early monks, if he could win south to the Skelligs and lay hidden, or reach to Arran, or hide in the grottoes of the loughs in Iar Connaught, carved ages ago by De Danaan magic!

These thoughts were with him as he gathered swiftly the needed things, and took last reluctant look at Ota the queen to whom he should deal death. Grief was on him that it must not be done by his hand if he would save the scornful holy thing in the tower.

So secure were all the guards of the outer walls, and the far points of vantage, that those of palace and cloister slept heavily and without care after the wine feast. It was not as an armed camp they rested, but a safe household.

He kept to the shadow of the walls from point to point and reached the tower safely. No guard was there, and

he unbolted the door below it in silence, and bolted it back of him in the darkness.

The queen's key served at top of the ladder and he felt that the girl was again crouched against the far wall.

"Haste," he whispered, "here are shoes and cloak. Take a leathern bag in which the spoils were carried and thrust the garments in that. We have muck and mire to wade through ere a boat is ours."

"Give me a knife that I may die here," she made answer. "You are a greater thing of fear than the northmen."

"Geroid is waiting a call of safety; I am his voice," he whispered.

"Geroid!" and her voice was a flutter of hope. "I will trust his trust of you, if. . . . you give me a knife!"

"It is here to your hand."

The dagger of the queen was passed to her in the darkness, ere she would take cloak, or shoes, or move a step toward the door.

"Haste!" he whispered as he heard her empty the bag with a little click of metal on stone, "haste, for the night is brief."

She crept to the ladder but halted as his hand touched hers.

"Put no touch on me," she muttered. "If die I do, it will not be in handclasp with the queen's lover."

At foot of the ladder he knelt and felt over the flagstone paving in the dark, and she heard heavy breathing as he worked fiercely among the rubbish and tossed aside sacks of grain stored there for siege. Then he found the stone for which he was searching and threw all his strength into his task.

Doirenn felt a rush of damp air where she stood. It had the smell of the river in it.

"The way is hard and narrow," he whispered. "Also it is wet under foot. Give me the bag."

"No," she said, "sacred things are in it: the holy book and jeweled chalice, not to be touched by God's outlaw. I am strong, I can follow."

At first it was dry, then the dampness came, then the water, and she was wading near to the knees but wading toward the open. A tangle of vines and brush was to push through and she saw the glimmer of the Great Star on the still river.

"Steady," he said, and moved up a space where the small boats were moored. A guard slept in one and Ruadan stood, girdle deep, beside it.

There was enough light to see the bare throat of the man, and strike true that no slightest cry go out on the night. He twitched once or twice and lay still forever.

Ruadan unfastened the boat and guided it back to where Doirenn stood, fearful and alert.

"Get in," he whispered, and she did so, not noting the Dane until she stumbled and felt warm blood on her hand.

"What is it?" she asked, but Ruadan climbed dripping into the boat and took up the oars, but did not answer.

He dared not row, lest the dip of the oars be heard. They drifted in the darkness, making no more sound than an otter swimming in the night.

Doirenn stared at the still thing by her feet, and thence to the still man of horror, who was perhaps her safety, and wrapping herself in the cloak, she drew close the sacred helps in which all her trust was.

A late and fading moon came up over the forest as Ruadan used the oars for speed — they had passed the last fire of a river guard in safety.

The weird light showed the staring open eyes of the dead man at her feet.

"Dead and unshriven!" she gasped in horror, "and you with the soul stain of blood on you!"

"It is the first of the men for whom Bronach was washing grave clothes in the dream I rode to tell you of a year ago," said Ruadan. "I saw his face yesterday, and knew he was the man. When we come to the high reeds of a meadow brook we will hide him there until the crows find him. There will be others."

Until the edge of the day they bore the weight of the body ere a rushy place was reached where a boat could enter leaving no broken reeds near the sweep of the river. Far in, where a bog would hold the body, Ruadan stripped him of cloak and ax, and left him to the black earth.

"You make not a prayer," said Doirenn in horror, "though well you were taught the ways of prayer."

"It is yours to pray," said Ruadan. "My knife did murder for you on him because you would not heed the warning I brought you from the mountains of the south a summer gone."

"It was enchantments you spoke, and not warning. The enchantments of men of evil are things to fear."

"Truth is truth — whether holy or unhallowed," he said darkly.

"Who is Bronach?" she asked after a long silence, while he sought other channel where the reeds would leave no trace as he swept again into the Sionan.

"She is the washer of the ford. She washes in the land of souls the garments of men doomed to die. For my house to see her means death by us or for us. In a dream you stood beside her in my land."

"The priests forbid," she began, but he stopped her with a gesture.

"Talk me no priestcraft! Bronach is older than foreign priesthood in Erinn."

"If I held not a holy book close in my hands for soul help, I am thinking the sky would fall on us with all its stars for that saying, or the water of the Sionan run backward from the sea!"

"It will do that in spite of your book," he made answer, but she gave him no belief. She did not think the truth was with Ruadan at all.

She watched him in dread and in disdain while he bent to the oars in the dawn. The boat skimmed the air like a bird under his tremendous strokes.

"This is the time of the sun they will be searching," he said. "One night is all we have in the lead of them, but many oarsmen has Ota the queen. Their course will be swift after they start the search."

No guards of the river or lake were stationed in the middle land between Cluain-mac-noise and Killaloe, for forest and meadow and island were stripped of Irish herdsmen and Irish homes along the Sionan. He toiled lustily, with the current in his favor, while the day was young and the way clear, knowing that cover must be found ere midday, and all other water journeys must be in the night.

When a fair place of shelter came in their path he turned the boat to the mouth of a meadow brook and crept carefully over the black waters drained from bogs beyond.

It was none too soon, for his breath was scarce even again from the labor until a man was seen by them leaning on a spear, moving swiftly west above the meadow reeds; his head was turned ever from side to side, searching.

The boat and the oarsmen could not be seen because of the height of the swamp growths and the distance. But their swiftness was a wonder to view: it would be a good horse to be beating it.

But they swept out of sight, and Ruadan knew the lough toward the sea was now a place of danger.

"They have no trail, and that is a good help," he said. "Now while the sun shines there is only the woods for us, and it may be berries or roots for food."

Far he went inland where the boat was lifted over shallows into a little still lough under shadow of the wood.

"'Twill serve," he said. "Nothing but the wild cattle may be coming, and it is a hiding place."

He left her to get out as she might and wade with wet feet in the sedgy marge. Her looks at him were ill and fearful, and she clutched to her the bag in which the sacred helps were borne.

"I have no liking for this place," she said, "and it will not be resting under birchtrees we will find Geroid."

Ruadan made no answer. The labor had been to the limit of strength. He drank of the cool water and cast himself on the turf. She frowned at the discourtesy.

"Where is Geroid, O Queen's Lover?" she asked. "It is to him I am going."

He looked long at her, darkly frowning. He had killed a man for her, and was risking life for her, yet she had no thought for a creature of earth, but thought only of that anchorite who had turned to prayer and a bed of stone, and would not look in her deep, seeking eyes.

"By the Elements! It is to your Geroid you shall go," he swore roughly. "My thought is that he is in his glory without you, but that is nothing. Though we circle Erinn to find the way to him, it is to Geroid you will go! Sorrow on the night you called for help and I was the fool to answer."

She let fall the leathern bag and sank down beside it—her eyes wide in wonder.

"How are you knowing that—and you an evil man in

an evil world? I did send the call. On my knees I made the prayer that holy Saint Kieran might help the call go out to some soul beyond the walls — and you — *you* — "

"I heard it in my sleep and knew your voice though I had only heard it when weighted heavy with hate. Also I followed it."

She brooded over that long, and drew the book to her.

"You followed Ota the queen," she said at last, "and you fled in the night with her jewels on you lest her kinsmen return and spear you to the ground."

"You shall go to your Geroid," he muttered, and got up and walked away.

So wearied was she that she fell into sleep there in that warm hour when the wind and the bees and birds all swept drowsily through the low green branches. So thick were they that a dusk was on the turf, though beyond their shadow the yellow light of sun was a glory.

It was beyond he had gone, and in her sleep she thought he had gone over some edge of the world where she could not find him. She woke with a moan of fear.

She lay there thrilled by a sort of terror that she had wanted him — it was a thing she could not understand, and puzzling things angered her. That thought of evil enchantments of his would not go away.

Then, while she framed a prayer against magic and druid spells, a sweet smell came to her, so close she thought it was part of a dream.

But it was a better thing, for fresh sweet blackberries were heaped beside her, and a little apart Ruadan sat with his back to her, eating.

She had not known how hungry she was until she tasted the melting sweetness of them, and then she determined that, on the rest of the way, she would pick her own berries — there was anger on her that she had not done it.

As she moved away to look for more, he spoke.

"You are not to go from this shadow," he said. "Cattle are beyond, and a hut of a herder; we have far to go, and meat will be good to have. I am going in a circle till I come to them, that no track will seem to come from here, for this must be the hiding place of you."

"And if foreign men are there? If they take you — if I am lost alone in this place where you bring me?"

"It is not in this place you will be lost. In the dream I saw you to the west, and that place is yet to find."

No more than that he said, and no look did he give to see if it was well or ill she liked it.

She crept back to the birchtree shadow, and watched him go, and she held the book with its precious work and precious words close to her bosom, and was making prayers on it — the prayers of Phadraig the Saint against enchantments.

With the eyes of her closed she went over the prayers and over them again, and the sun was in the very center of the sky. Two wood doves came close and spoke their loves sweetly in a rowan bush near, and listening to them was like listening to the silver string of the magic harp of the god of music, for the silver string has the wood music of sleep in it.

The sun was low to the edge of the forest trees and was red as a signal fire of danger when she woke. The doves were flown away, and the world was very still about her.

He had not come back, and she felt fear at the wide aloneness of the deep forest and the reedy marge of the wide lough; alone she could not make her way even to the flowing Sionan or Dearg below.

She looked the way he had gone, and listened for faintest sound of his step until every droning bee set her heart

to thump. When she could bear it no longer, she looked at her knife's edge, tied the leathern bag of the sacred things to her girdle, and looking with care to all things by which the return way might be found, she ran with swift feet to the last point from which he had vanished in the green.

No living thing was in sight, and she went on more slowly. There was a hill to climb, and from that height she had hope to see the cattle toward which he had gone. On the high point of the hill there was a circle of stones, and two with strange spiral carvings. These magic places of the old gods had curious legends in Meath, and she drew close to her the holy things of the altar as she stood in the shadow of the great stone to look westward over the plain.

The herds were there, but they were only far moving specks, no more size to them than birds. But among them, or near them, she could see no man.

But the hut of stone and timber at the edge of a wood she did see, and sat long in the shadow of the huge stone watching for a sign of any living thing — and no sign was there.

Then she crept through fern and gorse at the edge of the land where the cattle fed, and dragged herself along the brink of a dark wooded glen, and the hut was at the wall of that glen, and the look from there was a wide look for the herding.

A sound came to her, and her thought was that her heartbeat was loud in her ears from the fear of the still, strange place. And she crept more close and knew it was not her own heart, for it was a man breathing, and the breath was a rattle in the throat.

Through a chink in the hut she could see the man, and him a stranger and a great dog dead near him. The man

was stained with blood and was looking with no good looks at something her eyes could not see.

He was reaching for a long knife with blood on it — far from him it had fallen — and there was a stagger to every movement he made, for great weakness was on him.

Yet he watched one way whilst he crept to the knife and fell as if dying, yet roused himself to creep again a little ways.

The blood of Doirenn went cold from that look of hate on him, and then blazed keen and hot to learn why the knife was coveted even in the face of death.

With the dagger of Ota the queen unsheathed in her hand, she crept to the low door, and the low sun of the west pierced to the dark corner where Ruadan lay. She could see no movement of him, yet she knew he was not dead, for if it had been so, the foreign man would not reach thus for the knife, or creep, dying himself, on a wounded foe.

She had no plan of attack, yet as he grasped the knife and lifted it over the body of Ruadan, she leaped through the door, and her dagger struck deep and true in the neck of the stranger.

He gurgled, choked, and lay still.

She crept back to the wall and sat there, wild-eyed and fearful. She had not meant to do the thing before her: to strike the knife from him had been her thought. But the right hand of her had done its own task despite any thought of hers.

The lowering sun slanted over his dead face, filling her with horror at the moving shadows of it. Her teeth chattered with chill at the dead man and dog, and at the other man whose breath she saw lifting ever so little the lacings of his garment.

It was that piteous little breath, no deeper than of a

child in arms, by which she was urged at the last to draw near. She felt frozen, and the leathern bag with the sacred helps lay without the portal, but without that help, and in forgetfulness of prayer, she crept forward.

He lay in a pool of blood, black and stiff. His shoulder bore a deep gash, and the red tide yet came faintly at each breath. A long slant of a blade had creased his brow and his face shone gray white where the dark smear had not touched it. It all seemed to have chanced a long time before.

That thought coming to her, she went over where the dog lay and touched it; stiff it was and cold. . . . While she had slept in drowsy rest under the birchtree Ruadan had fought out a battle of fierceness with the huge foreign man and the dog stretched there as big as a calf. The two men had all but killed each other. Each had thought his enemy gone out of life ere he gave way to weakness or swoon, and the foreign man had wakened first.

Terror went from her suddenly when the mystery of it went. There was left only a wounded man for her care, and she knelt beside him and loosened the lacings of his garment as she had seen the white fingers of the queen unlace it in the tower.

THE sun set, and the other suns rose ere he wakened to knowledge. Troubled phantoms of blood and death were with him in his weakness, and a strange presence he did not know.

It was in a rosy dawn he wakened to know the walls, and how he had first found them, but the strange presence

was like mist of the seafoam — ever about to take form in his mind, and ever fading again.

And out of that fog of dreams and phantoms of carnage a vision of Paradise came to him.

It was perhaps the slant of the sun through the mists of the morning by which the magical thing was wrought, but where the sun-kissed green had been seen through the portal, there was at once a glory of gold beyond any glory of saint told him in the teachings. He looked at her and thought of Brighde, the ever young, when bondmaid to her druid master, bearing cups and bowls of common things made holy by touch of her hands.

For she stood there with the sun making a halo of her red-gold hair, and in her two hands was held a golden chalice of richest handicraft, set with the thirteen flashing stones of beauty.

The chalice was brimming with foam of new milk, and when she saw his eyes, wide open, she stood silent, waiting, but the look in her eyes was the look of Brighde, ever the giver, the serving-maid to whom the angels sang.

"You are a dream, and not truth," he muttered. "You are Brighde the goddess; you are the fiery arrow of radiance in hearts of men; you are Love, and you are Knowledge. When the priests could not stamp you out, they made a saint of your name to hold the worship of you. You are the vision always beyond a soul — you are only a dream, and I could wish you truth."

"The warm milk is true as if in a wooden bowl instead of a golden chalice," she said. "Two days it has been your food, and has served you fairly."

He drank it as a gift of God, and stared at her.

"And it is a vision come true," he said. "Two days? And I not alone here. There were others — a dog and a man I killed."

"They were dragged and rolled over the cliff of the glen. There was no other way," she said.

"And this?" he asked, pointing to the mass of soothing poultice on his shoulder.

"It is anemone, a flower of healing. I but gathered it and bruised the leaves. The work of that was nothing. The only task of fear was to hold you from wandering. Too restless were you for the boat and the road of the Sionan."

"And you did it? I dreamed of your hands touching me; I thought it a dream of Brighde who was goddess and then saint."

He went asleep again almost as he spoke, for the weakness was yet on him.

WHEN he wakened his thoughts were more steady, and he asked if the golden chalice had been a thing of dreaming.

"I took it from sacrilege in the tower," she confessed. "It was the cup of sacrament, and not to be left to pagans if my life could give it guard."

He looked at her long, with thoughts of that day in the tower, and asked where her dagger was.

"It is no longer with me — I have taken instead the one of the herder."

"The other had sharp slimness and value of gold and jeweled hilt."

"This, with the horn of a deer for handle, is a cleaner thing."

He thought she meant cleaner than a knife touched by the hand of Ota, and his well hand went up to his neck

where the necklet rested — the gold of it had saved him a death stroke of the herder.

"This necklet has served its task," he said. "It can take its place with the other spoils saved by you."

"It has no place among them," answered Doirenn coldly. "I saved only holy things from sacrilege."

And he saw by that he had said the wrong thing, for she was no longer the Brighde of tender service — she was a gold-crowned judge who looked down from a far height.

He held in his memory the wordy condemnation of the priests, and of Ronan the abbot, but it was easier to endure their revilings than her frozen look when she remembered the love gift and caressings of Ota the queen.

"It is to your Geroid you shall go," he said, and looked at her darkly, and went out from the hut of the herder, though the blue of the sky and green of the turf were as one before his eyes because of the weakness on him.

It was better to be in the woods alone with his tranced vision of Brighde, than to face the cold scorn of the maid who had seen the white hands of Ota on his throat.

But despite the look, or the word of scorn for him, Doirenn was not at ease if he was long out of her sight. Never had she outgrown the fear of what she had felt at sight of the great dead dog and the dying foreign man crawling for the knife.

There was trouble on her for the thing she had done, and no holy man anywhere to take her confession and lighten her mind. Prayer she could make, and did — but for the sending of an unshriven soul to God there was no comfort, and her thoughts had no sunshine.

Sometimes there was terror on her because she could no longer judge Ruadan for the stark body at her feet in that first awesome night. From the rath of Fethna to the garden of the nuns at Cluain-mac-noise had been all the world

known to her. Even in the raid of the Danes on her father's house, when the black smoke of burnings had left her without roof of her own, or kindred of her own, she had been borne to safety before the battle.

Of the foreign men who were pagans she thought no more than of wolves in a pack leaving death on their path, but for Ruadan, called evil, yet with knowledge of godly things, she could find no gentle excuse — until her own hand had the secret stain of blood on it!

By that was she made kindred in evil to him, and the shining beauty of her was under shadow from the thought.

HIS strength came back and the wound healed, he had curious looks at her, ever with the book of amber and pearl of sea on the cover. But when he spoke of it she frowned her reproof.

"It is holy, and it is a safe charm to lead me out of the wilderness."

"Yet is it made by the hand of a man," he said.

"How should you be knowing that?" she asked. "It is knowledge not for sinful men. My own thought is that Saint Kieran sent an angel to do the words of this, it may be that a man made the cover."

"It may be," he said. "May the charm of it lead you safely, for another night we leave this place. I am able. Even Dermot and Grania never hid so long on the way to happiness as we here."

"There is a difference," she said, and she blazed a rose red at thought of Grania's love.

"There is," he agreed. "Dermot had to his aid friends

and gods. The pagan gods are driven out by christian bells and there is only the wilderness for us with that white cat on the trail. I must find hiding for you and leave you there and gather men of the west to serve as guard."

"I will not be left again," she said. "To be left behind in darkling wood, or dreary cave, gives me more fear than to be on the way."

She drove in a young cow and braided a rope of vines to hold her for the killing that food might be theirs on the way, for their journey along the shores of Lough Dearg must be in the nights, and all movement in light of the sun was danger.

With his one well hand and her two they managed the killing, but she turned away her head because the knife brought her thought of the dead foreign man under the cliff.

Ruadan went through the russet fern and the berry vines seeking the silky inner bark of a dead tree for the spark of flint and steel, and when he found it he wandered on to the circle of stones to sharpen spear and knife on the ancient altar. When he made his way back he saw a strange thing, for the glen below the cliff was plain before him, and he stood very still as if fearing the ancient gods had heard his speech of their fading away. There was a glitter of gold and a jewel among the ferns below him, and it was not a place for the seeking of such wealth.

He crept forward, and saw the dog and the man who lay face downward as he had been rolled from the cliff. And it was in the neck of the man the jeweled dagger had been thrust deep. The sun shone on it through a rift in the boughs above, and set it all aglitter.

It was the knife of Doirenn, and so deep had it struck that it took a strong hand to draw it out. Away from there he cleansed it in the earth, and washed it all in a shadowed rill, and brooded over it in a maze of wonder.

A woman of frankness like Ota the queen he could know the thoughts of. She said the thing she wanted and took it. If battle had to be waged to gain it, that battle she fought like a man and took her victory prize, or put her own foot on the neck of an enemy.

But this thing of radiant scorn and icy piety who thrust her knife deep and went to prayer was a different breed. He would not have thought her hand strong enough for that stroke. The edge was turned where it grazed a bone.

So he carried her secret — and with it the mystery of her.

AS they could, they went from the hut of hiding and went seaward in the nights through the great lough, and hid in forest or swamp meadows or inlands at dawn, until the churning, quick current was reached, and there the boat was hidden, and cooked meat stored with the altar jewels in the leathern bag, and they went afoot through dusk of the deep wood, or crept, hidden, through lush grasses of wide meadows.

At times, afar off, they saw men with cattle on the hillsides, and a boat of courier speeding down the rapids. Once a warrior's boat passed beneath a cliff where they lay hidden, and glittering shields were bright in the sun.

"Look well," said Ruadan, "for it is Amlaf, the prince, who is on your trail. A strong man is Amlaf, with king and queen for his kinsfolk. It may be he could make you queen of Erinn by a lucky turn, for Turgesius — which is Latin for Thorgille — has great tribute, is not young, and it is said by all that the threat in the night sky is the 'star

of the enemy'; as it grows strong — will grow the strength of the Dane. If gods fight against it, where is the refuge of Erinn?"

She looked as bidden, and the man in the boat was slender and tawny, with long tresses of pale silk waving in the soft air. Jeweled he was in great beauty, and his armor was of white bronze. The blue-green of his eyes was like the glint of his spear-heads, and the cloth of his garment was broidered with wires of pale gold.

"He is as beautiful as your lover, the queen," said Doirenn in scorn, "but not so strong. He will hold no strong star in the sky."

Ruadan looked at her in gloom at the mocking, and after a little he laughed.

"That naming of her leaves no scar on me," he said. "But 'queen's lover' suits me ill."

"Is it so?" asked Doirenn staring after the warboat with its deft oarsman. "Then again are you kin to Dermot who was not the lover but the many times loved."

He took the mocking blackly enough.

"Sorrow is mine that, like Dermot, I have no bread unbroken to leave on the road for them that trail us," he said. "And you to your Geroid!"

But she knew not the meaning of the words of broken bread, and he saw that, and the flame of his anger went out.

"It is ill enough to pass time in rages when our time on this earth may be ending," he said. "That man below is a strong prince with a strong army at the shore. Horses and cattle are theirs and one spearsman in every Irish house of Thomond. No one king of Erinn commands tribute today like to the tribute of Turgesius and of Ota. Their swarms are here like bees on honey, and no roof is ours for safety. The caves of Iar Connaught are safe if we

can reach them, with your monk to aid. You may have your fill of life in a cloistered cell ere the day I can guard you to safety."

"And if — if Geroid is not to be found? And if all roads are closed?"

"Geroid will be found if he is left alive. These hills were once hunting ground for me, and the cells of Senan's men were known as my own mountains."

"And, if he is not left alive?"

"Of that we will not speak. If Amlaf, or if Ota, trap us in their wide net, you will die first, so make your prayers."

She looked at him long, and the shadow on his face caused her wonder, for she had heard all evil of him but never that he was of faint heart.

"Is it so far to your own domains?" she asked, and never before had she asked of home or kindred or life of his.

"It is not far as the ravens fly, but my clan have their rages against me. After that judgment of cattle, not one would take spear for a maid I would hide on Ardsolais."

"It is said you have good will of Niall the king. How can the friend of a king be without help?"

"The Lady Luaine is of the clan of his mother, and the grace of a king can grow cold."

"Like enough," said Doirenn, "she told them of your enchantments."

"Like enough," agreed Ruadan, and there was laughter in his eyes. "A woman must ever have ready some excuse of magic. Is it enchantment you are thinking?"

"What else to think when you are dark and not handsome? Wives of men put jewels on you and follow where you go. How is that but by enchantings?"

"How indeed?" asked Ruadan. "And since you are

knowing that, it is a strange brave heart that is in you to drink from the same cup with me."

"The cup is holy and is to go with Geroid into sanctuary, and the book with me is holy. That is my strength."

"Since it is so I would ask concerning this godly Geroid to whose sanctity you would trust them. Since my life is too evil for your christian grace, what is the saintly enchantment of him, that a well-favored maid would cover herself with a veil because he chose to go walking out of her life?"

"Enchantments are evil, and he was never evil," said Doirenn. "He made beauteous verses and told me his love in them sweetly. He gave me kind kiss at parting, and only to God would he give himself rather than to me. No payer of cattle was he, and—no love of a pagan queen!"

"It may be so," said Ruadan. "And when was this high loving of his and of yours?"

"There is no hurt to him in making speech of that," she answered, "and it may bear its lesson to you. He had seven and ten years to his age, and three less to mine."

Ruadan stared, and then strove to seem grave, yet were his eyes full of laughter and she saw it.

"Yet he could love and he did!" she made protest angrily. "Tablets were sent to me often and his verses on them told me that."

"Ay, his verses!" said Ruadan. "From the dull days of schooling he would have some fair thing to hear his calf-loves, and you were the most gracious! Child, at that age I was writing verse to Venus and Brighde, and sad at heart for the ghost of fair Dierdre who loved so well! All the world is turned to love at that age—it is the schooling of hearts."

"I alone was his Venus and his Brighde and his

Dierdre," she said and drew back in proud anger at his jesting. "How could you, queen's lover and God's Dastard, read that lesson of loving, or know holiness of such writings?"

Her anger was like a lash, and almost it whipped him into turning the pages of her holy book and show the writing of his own name there cunningly twined with the interlaced scrolls of the last page. But he knew it was not easy to believe that his other days had been filled by that beauty of line and color. It would be to her but another proof of enchantment if he should show it her, as he might.

And he put aside the thought for another reason: it would take from her the only thing to which she trusted as a link with her saints.

"Time is a good story-teller," he said, and his smile was grim enough. "On a day to come you may know the weight of your words. Come, the hunter who seeks you is gone beyond sight, and we can cover much ground ere the dark comes down."

She obeyed him in silence — half shamed because of her anger and his quietness.

SHE still bore the precious book, making prayer on it through all the terrible ways they trod, but he bore the leathern bag in which the food and cup and jewels were safe. It was strange to her, but after she had found him wounded and given him drink from the cup, she no longer thought so deeply of his evil repute, and since the herder went over the

cliff with her dagger she felt less bitter for the other sins on his soul. But when she found herself thinking kindly of him as a human she grew angry with herself and went to her prayers.

ALL of a day did Ruadan of Ardsolais and Doirenn na Marvan lay in hiding of the hills where the path to the high cell of Saint Senan could be seen through the branches. Far beyond was the smoke of the northmen's fires, and footmen and men on horseback were seen to cross open spaces. One rider, on a steed of shining black, had much of glittering gear and waving flaxen hair —it was Amlaf.

"He has had runners in these hills. See, they keep up their stride until report is made, when they fall anywhere for rest. It is well we hid long in the herder's hut. Time was given them to make wide their search; it is over for this place, and that is well for us."

Yet, he watched long for slightest sign ere he crept through the tall fern and alder and young oak on the hillside. On the ancient path in the stone to the cell above he dared not venture until the turn of the hill was reached, and no human thing in sight.

Like creeping wild things of the wilderness, they thus made their way beneath the leafy coat of green until the steep path was reached, and it in the gray stone cliff narrow and winding and curving the hill above the lough.

Then Ruadan looked at her with the look of parting.

"It is here I must hide you until I go up to that place,"

he said. "You see the steepness and the danger. This is the place to wait where the leaves are thick."

Doirenn made appeal to go, but he would not hear. Then she kissed the cup from which they had drunk, and fastened close the leathern bag into which she had placed all sacred things but the book.

"Take these holy things as warrant to a holy man," she said, "lest evil come to you for intrusion on his pious thoughts."

"And it is not evil you are wishing me then?" he asked, and looked on her steadily, but her eyes turned elsewhere, and rose color flushed in her pale face.

"I would not that you die in your sins," she made answer, and his smile had weary bitterness as she spoke.

"A hundred deaths of dread has a man died for you those summer days," he said. "Yet that man breathes human breath. The sacred things I will bear as you bid, lest I could not carry them, and you also, on the second journey — if I find your saint waiting you!"

"And if your footing should not prove sure, and if death should wait you on the rocks below?"

He stood still above her, looking down where she knelt with the book against her breast.

"Here is my answer to you," he said, and tossed her his dagger. "That is the better part of Ruadan. Give the blade deep to drink if the eyes of Amlaf, or of Ota the queen, look on you again."

"And you?" she whispered, "it leaves you without a blade for danger."

"Not so, O Doirenn," he said; "I have a dearer thing." And he showed her the jeweled hilt of her blade of death.

She went white and covered her face, and he moved carefully along the narrow ledge with his burden and

shield and spear, up and up until he noted birds fly out from nests in the crannies far below. Then a sharp turn came in the rock, and the cell sanctified by holy men for two centuries was the end of the narrow way.

A man knelt there by the stone trough which served as bed, and no other thing was there but a cauldron on dead ashes, and cup and bowl of wood. Some moss was heaped in a corner, and birds' eggs were in the bowl.

"God's blessing on the home," said Ruadan in courtesy, but the kneeling man whirled in terror.

"Why have you come again? And why do you now speak in clear Latin and not before?" he asked, and his voice was high and shrill like that of an angry woman—much more like a woman even than was the deep voice of Doirenn.

"I am come because that is my task," said Ruadan. "If you are Geroid of Cluain-mac-noise, I have gift and message for you, and I am Ruadan of Ardsolais."

The monk cried out in horror, and waved him away.

"Man of blood and traffic in evil!" he said. "Begone from this place of prayer. Twice come the Danes here in search, with tales of your murders, and your stealing of maids. If they find you here it will be evil to me. Get you gone!"

"A man of blood I have been, and may be," said Ruadan, looking in the pale, narrow face and the eyes of terror. "But I am also a keeper of sacred things, and it is your task as a man to help me in the guarding of them."

"You! You were the outcast—God's Dastard—the youth of holy training who threw off the robe for temptings of the world," said the monk, and he moved the width of the cell away and spread out his thin hands as a wall, lest Ruadan move a step nearer. "Go back to the world and bring not your evil here where holiness has lived—here, where in prayer I wait the crown of sanctity and the wings of angels in Paradise!"

"I will go back when I have done my task. I bring here gold vessels of the altar that you may know my intent, and below a more precious thing waits for sanctuary—it is the maid they told you I stole away—it is Doirenn, daughter of Marvan. It is a body and soul to be saved by you, and by me."

But Geroid fell groveling beside the stone couch, waving his hands in wild protest.

"Take your evils from this place," he cried out. "Have I fought the demons of woman-temptings for naught? Seven times seven days in the spring of the year did I pray in water of ice to my armpits. Nine times nine prayers have I likewise made to that end, for youth is still on me! Is it from the King of Hell you are come to bring temptings of women who breed the evils of carnal loves?"

RUADAN stared at him as at a wild dog he would throttle, and then let fall the sack, looking at the wasted form and the wild eyes. He tried to see where her human youth of the verses was hidden behind the grievous mask, and could not.

"I need teaching to tell me that love is of Hell," he said. "In a swoon of half death in a forest I had a vision of love with a difference. It was a radiant love, bearing healing for human ills — yes — and it shrank not from soiled hands, or blood-stained hands, in the service — that was my vision. You, monk that you are, have had more than vision: As children, Doirenn and you have gone with clasped hands and no wall between you. She has heart-love for the remembering of that time and she has come the hard way for your help above all men. You look not so much to me, but the priests tell us you are made in God's image. No god of a man can be a coward, and we may have enemies to overcome ere we get her to safety, but I am here to help, and that is my message."

"Go you hence with your sacrilege. Holiness does no battle," said Geroid wildly. "Go you hence to your bloody wars for women and cattle and the things of the world. Leave me in peace with my God, and the saving of my soul."

Ruadan listened and laughed.

"To save your own soul? By the Elements! I have belief in no man, and in no god of a man who hides in safe sanctuary when white innocence flees from the ravisher. To sanctuary here has come Doirenn who deems you holy. If you cast her out, she has only Ruadan as safety. And all Erinn can tell you Ruadan boasts no holiness."

"Get you gone! Your ways are bloody and fearful and your ways are evil."

"Not less evil than the weight of my hand on you if you hearken not," said Ruadan darkly. "Two holy gifts have I borne to you through much danger, for the cell of a monk would seem best hiding place. One is this," and he emptied

on the floor of the cell the gold and gem-set things of the altar, "the other is a human soul in a fair body, which, O praying monk, is the holier thing for your shelter. This is the time for the choice of a man."

The monk lifted the jeweled chalice and gloated over the golden monstrance with each ray of the sun set in crimson and rose and yellow gem.

"The man who wrought this work had help of the angels of God," he whispered, and made the sacred sign as he lifted each treasure.

"What of the handiwork of angels in the creation of the stray maid of warm life, and music of voice and eyes of pureness?" asked Ruadan. "Look at this hand of mine. It has been a craftman's hand in the work you adore there; it has been a bloody hand in the work you hide from here, the work of the world! It is a strong hand and not yet a conquered hand. Yet it shakes, as my soul shakes at thought of that fair creation when God spoke Doirenn into this world of ours. Make your choice of the holier thing, O monk she deems holy! This is the time for your choice as a man — and by your choice and hers, Ruadan abides."

"Get you gone from holy ground with your sacrilege of creation and Hell's vision of carnal loves!" screamed Geroid, and held the monstrance of red gold between his own body and Ruadan. "The things of holy altars I will hold at God's will, but name no name of woman in the ears of God's chosen — they drive out the music of angels' wings!"

Then a cry came to them — the cry of a woman, and close, and Geroid fell on his knees in terror, and gathered close the glittering jewels, and Ruadan unslung the short spear from his back.

"It is the time for the choice of a man," he said, and

sped as a cat along the narrow path to the turn where he had last looked down on her.

But a man on a black stallion waited there instead, and the face was the face of Amlaf, brother of Ota the queen!

HE looked up and laughed, and the thing he laughed at was Doirenn, who stood on the narrow ledge waiting Ruadan, and in her hand was his dagger.

"You were so keen for his choosing that your heart could not wait that I save your feet this hardship?" said Ruadan, darkly mocking.

And the monk in the cave, and the prince on the black stallion, were as far from them both as was fear, when she looked in his eyes.

"I followed, O Ruadan, lest he do you harm for your life as a man of sin. And I listened, O Ruadan, that your dagger might in truth drink deep if you made me his portion — and you going elsewhere," and his dagger was held with the book, in love, against her breast.

"To my heart!" he said, and circled her with his arm, and she was borne along the path by him while his eyes searched below for glitter of spears or followers of the prince.

Amlaf fitted an arrow to his bow and waited the turn where Ruadan would be fair target without hurt to the coveted maid of beauty.

But the hand of Ruadan, thrilled by the love of her, was strong and steady. His spear had been sharpened at the altar place of the old gods, and the cast of it took Amlaf in the throat as he looked up laughing. After that he

laughed no more on earth but went to his own Norse gods of the summer sailors.

Ruadan stripped him of his warrior garb, and weighted the body with stone, and cast it in the waters of Lough Dearg, while Doirenn stood on the shore holding the quivering steed, alert at the presence of Death.

Ruadan looked about him, and looked at the girl, whose face was a drooping flower, and whose hair was a golden veil.

"Look up, O Doirenn," said Ruadan, "for this is the end of the dream! This is the shore on which I saw you with Bronach — washer of raiment for the dead. Beyond this all is dark to me on the road."

"Not so," she said. "We have walked together through the nights of the evil star, but now the light is ours."

He caught her to him, and kissed and mocked her.

"This is all your prayers and your glittering book served you against enchantings," he said.

"They served me well," she made answer staunchly. "In the sickness of the wound I prayed for your life. Here, where you left me, I prayed that Geroid might take into sanctuary the altar jewels but leave me free for always to walk with you."

AMONG the Danes, that wood by Lough Dearg gained weird tales of Irish enchantings, and the reason was that Amlaf the prince had ridden along the marge for his pleasure one summer day, and never came again into the sight of mortals.

Belief it was in these enchantings and in the powers

of the mystic books of Christ's men that went far to lead the invaders, also by this time weary of their raiding, back to their own shores.

FAR north in Connaught a youth in dress of the northmen was seen with Ruadan riding a black steed with royal chains of silver in his furnishings. The cropped hair of the youth was the color of the sun, and Latin was his only speech. He was named Angus and called a prince of the foreigners, but heart-companion to Ruadan. Not while Ota and Turgesius held sway in Deasmond did Ruadan go south out of Connaught, or let the youth see the lands of the south.

And when he went again into his own domain of Ardsolais a woman of mystery rode beside him, and for her radiance of beauty she was thought a fairy mistress such as men of olden time had met at some edge of the mortal world.

He called her Brighde the Beautiful, and all the people were calling her that, and she was his wife, and the cattle of Ruadan stayed on his own hills after she came.

BECAUSE of the vanishing of Amlaf the prince no Danes climbed again to the cell of the solitary monk, and after the weakening of the Danes the stories of enchantment there went abroad far and wide, and it was a place to shun both day and night, and no one was re-

membering the young monk who, in that year of the fearful star of Turgesius, had climbed that hard way for holiness.

BUT in after years, a strange harmless babbler appeared one day among a herd of cattle in Thomond, shouting to them of heavenly crowns and wings of angels.

He had no clear speech to men, and was called the "Nameless" for the reason that no clan knew him, and he knew no mortal and no home.

His dress was of skins, and his hair and beard were his only mantle to the middle. Neither in Gaelic nor in Latin could his life be learned, but no door was closed on him nor food denied him, for gods and saints were known to come under secret and lowly guise to the abodes of men.

And on a fair day, after seven years, Doire, the childling of Ruadan, divided a cake with the Nameless on the green, and then led him, as a child with a new playmate, through all the garden and to the grianan where the wife of Ruadan sat with her maids and discoursed of the day when the master of Ardsolais would come again from the wars.

All said, "God save you, and Mhoirre bless you," to the visitor from the wilderness, and food was given and the child watched in wonder that a mortal could feed as the hounds fed.

"The name of me is Doire, son of Ruadan, who is lord of the mountain," said the boy. "You have eaten my cake and come in my gate; tell to me now whose son are you?"

But the Nameless stared vacant and seeking, and made mutterings, and all they could hear from him was "Ruadan? Ruadan — Ruadan?"

Then the wife of Ruadan, who was called Brighde the Beautiful, called to her son Doire, and whispered in his ear a secret saying, and the lad ran back and spoke.

"May it be that you were once the son of Kineath? And that your name was once Geroid?"

At which saying the Nameless stood up in fear as if for flight, and cried out, "Kineath — and Geroid — and Ruadan! Ruadan and she who was weighed in the balance with the jeweled chalice? Call you your druids, or your priests of wisdom, that I uncover the place of that hiding! Go you in haste ere the mist again covers the knowing!"

In haste they did go — all the maids aflutter, and the wife of Ruadan sat in the shadow ordering all things, speaking no word aloud.

And Fergus, her cleric, came in haste from the oratory, and made prayer, and hearkened, and the Nameless spoke in good Latin, and said:

"Take with you this childling who lifted the mist from me. Go you to the cave in the mountain over the Lough of Dearg; to the cell of Senan the Saint find you the way; and in the stone trough of the bed there find you the jeweled chalice, and the golden treasures. They were the bribe of Hell to bring temptings of the world. Let them be weighed; let them be put in the scales against my name and my soul in the Day of days!"

"Against whose name will I write it for that day?" asked Fergus, "and against whose soul?"

But at the question the Nameless turned away and shook his head. The mist had again fallen, and he wandered again to the fields babbling of crowns and wings.

"He is but a strange innocent," said Fergus, "and has no likeness to owners of golden service and jeweled treasures. It would be as search for the many-colored palaces of the magical Danaans under the hills about us."

But the wife of Ruadan had a different thought.

"What the search may uncover rests with God and Mhoirre," she said. "But a sign has been sent to the son of Ruadan, and to him the honor will be if precious things or holy things are in that cell of a hermit. Take horses and take men, and take Doire, our son, to that place of the cliff on the shore of Dearg, and take well-cured skins and ink for the record and witness. Every jewel write you down as count is made, and every other thing of treasure. If it be that they are holy things of Senan the Saint, their blessings may descend upon another altar."

Thus it was done, and great glory went to the son of Ruadan, who uncovered the jeweled chalice, and wondrous other golden altar service buried under moss, and shells of eggs, and bones of animals.

LEGENDS grew up about that finding, for after they were blest by the cleric that no evil thing might leave smirch on their beauty, they were placed with prayer in the oratory, and on the altar beside them was found in the morning a jeweled book of holiness, thick set with amber and pearl. No book had been found in the stone cell, and Fergus, the priest, had never before seen or heard of it. Many viewed it, and all thought it had, without doubt, belonged to Senan the Saint, and after two hundred years of death he had come back to gather

together the things once precious to him on earth as a proof to pious souls.

This was the thought of Fergus, who had a pride in the holy honors sent to the roof where he was sheltered.

AND when Ruadan came back victorious from battle with the Danes, it was Fergus who discoursed to him of a great church as their shrine. He made clear that the wife and son of Ruadan had strange gifts and powers of knowledge. If they were christian gifts it was well for their souls, but if the power was of pagan strength, then fastings and prayers should lift the last doubt. He reminded Ruadan that his own peace with the church was not yet accomplished, and that there were strange tales of how the mother of his son had ridden out of the wilderness on a black stallion and no clan and no country had been named for her claiming. The trappings of her steed were those of a king, and she wore coat of mail like a young warrior of the sea gods, riding out of the waves. No word to her confessor told of her life before that day, and there were times when the soul of Fergus was troubled over these mysteries, and was craving more altars to the saints at Ardsolais.

"That is well enough," said Ruadan. "She shall have a temple of her own fashion for the housing of her sacred things — women and priests have hunger for such. Guard you the souls by prayers in the temple, Fergus, and my spearman will guard the temple if our shields are lucky. That is the task of the man."

And with his wife, the Beautiful, in her bower, he

laughed, and stroked her white shoulder, and mocked as was his wont.

"Thus I pay for temples to guard your soul from enchantments," he said, "for Fergus the priest finds you in a grievous way."

SHE mounted the black steed and rode beside Ruadan with Doire, their son, and sought a fair level on a green height where huge stone slabs stood upright with other slabs resting on them like high altars. It was the place of ancient fires and for that was called the Hill of Lights.

"Here, by this circle, are the hearts of the people," she said, "for at new moon they are coming, and at the rise of sun they are coming in certain summer days. Why build the new altar in another place?"

She paced with her child the great space where the new temple would be built for sinners, and the eyes of Ruadan looked their love on her, and on the son she had borne him.

AND in the edge of the wild field where the forest came down from the mountains, the cattle lifted their heads as a man, hairy and clad in skins, strode among them with proud authority shouting to them of crowns and wings.

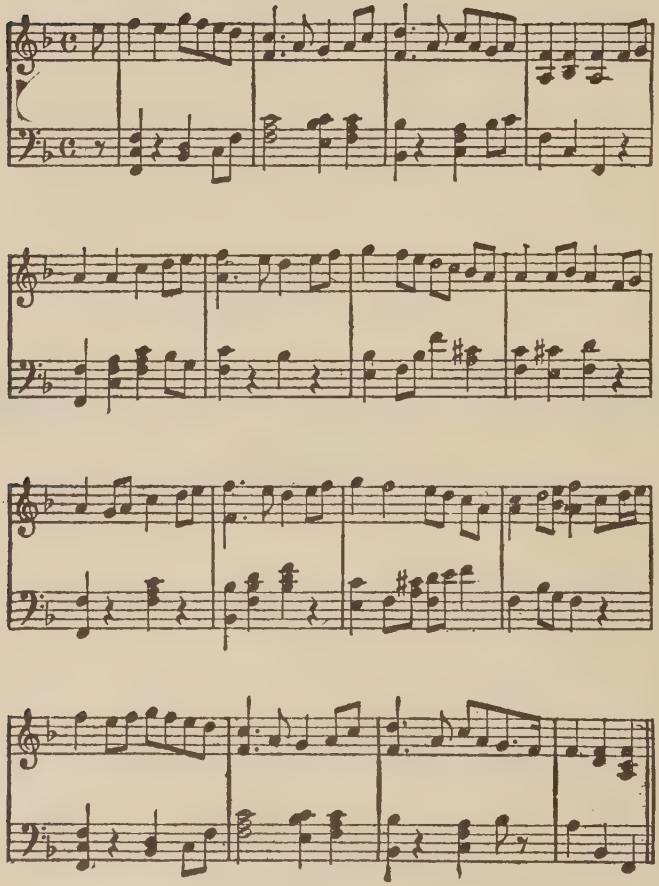
"Whose is the voice?" asked Ruadan.

And his "heart-companion" of the wilderness touched his shoulder and spoke low and awed.

"That is the voice of the man who saw no holiness in battle to protect the helpless — it is the voice of the man who saw in love only the mating of beasts — and his reward is his."

LIADAN AND KURITHIR

The Dream of Kurithir



LIADAN AND KURITHIR

"I am Liadan
Who loved Kurithir,
It is true as they say.

"The music of the forest
Would sing to me when with Kurithir,
Together with the voice of the purple sea."

IT was the time of Hugh Finnliath, Ard-Ri (High King) of Erinn, and glad youth of May lay on the land.

The hawthorn was in bloom against the hills, and the cuckoo was calling as it flew in long billowy glides to its mate in the yew-tree nest.

As the bird to its mate, went the gray eyes and the heart of Liadan na Donal, when she looked on Kurithir, the poet and friend of kings, in Far Connaught. Fair and gracious was he among the friends of her host, and fair and gracious was Flann Siona, prince of the Sionan, beside him as they greeted her, and greeted Aevil, her sister, who was beautiful as a night of stars.

It was not the beauty of bronze-gold hair, or blue eyes of Kurithir, by which she was held, and it was not the beauty of raiment and the jeweled links of his garments, for the daughters of the Ui Maic of Far Kerry were not

without grandeur in the castle of Donal, their father. Out of all the guests and the greetings, she knew not if Kurithir, son of Doborchū, bent head or knee more graciously than others. She knew only that his eyes looked deep, and looked steady, into her own, and that without words they bore to her a message.

The message was strange because her heart leaped in her bosom to meet it, and that was a new thing in her life.

And that message was this: "We have found the way to each other at last, and both of us knowing it!"

Other eyes saw that look, and the wild-rose flush on her white throat, and Aevil, her half-sister, spoke bitter words when they were safe within their chamber, and there was present only the dark nurse of Aevil, whose name was Moria, and whose lore was deep in herbs and curious knowledge of druidcraft.

"Know you not that as elder sister my day of marriage must pass before your day of courting?" raged Aevil. "For that reason I am making this circuit of visits to see the lands and the furnishings of our friends. It was in my charity that I brought you by me, and an ill day it was to me!"

LIADAN sat by the window and looked down into the enclosed garden where a red rose tree and a white rose vine were twining against the stone wall, and she made no reply, for her thoughts were all of Kurithir, and that look in his eyes, and she felt close to him as the white rose twining to the tree of the red bloom.

But Moria talked much as she smoothed the black hair of Aevil, and vowed by the Elements that the beauty of Aevil exceeded by much all other beauty at the Dun of Dearg. And that the eyes of Flann, Ri Domna of Erinn, had not passed her by — nor had the other men.

There was truth in this, for black and red and rich cream was the beauty of Aevil, and her pride was great because of her beauty to which all men did honor. Liadan had heard all her life that there was no beauty in Connaught to compare with Aevil who should, for beauty alone, be a queen, and Liadan was well content that the crown go to her sister so long as she had her harp and her garden, and now — two blue eyes for mirrors!

But Aevil stormed and threw off the hand of Moria and would have no caressing of words.

"Well you know there is one man spoke of here for my meeting, and that man is Kurithir the poet," she said. "He is the man whose songs are sung by many, and my greeting was spoiled by a gray rat!"

"Only my eyes are gray, sister," said Liadan, "and if you like not my gray robe, it shall be put aside for our visit. What you choose shall be done; all is one to me."

For the song of joy was so strong in her heart that all the world was shining summer for her. Her slender gray-clad feet trod as on the clouds of heaven because of that look in his eyes. She donned a robe of green with a girdle of silver, and in the brown curls of her hair she fastened green jewels from oversea, and in the rush light of the great hall she slipped quiet as a moonbeam, but Flann and Kurithir, who were foster brothers and friends ever, left all others to bow before her.

"We look for Maighdenmara in the old sea waves where the white foam is," said Flann. "Men never hope to see her drive in a chariot from the forest."

Kurithir said nothing, but his eyes were on hers, and she liked that best, and dreamed of him sweetly that night on her maiden pillow.

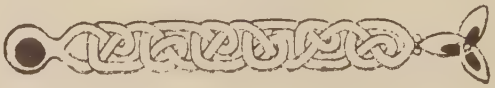
IN the dawn Flann and Kurithir walked along the sea cliff and spoke as brothers in bond.

"There are other maids and many for you, Flann. For me there is only this one and I loving her."

"You speak your heart and that is best, comrade. My eyes will look the other way, and her sister is a fair queen for any castle."

"I am thinking no castles," said Kurithir, "I am thinking of a little house under the oaks where the thrushes sing, and where heart can hear heart away from sound of the steps of man. My harp I will take, and hers. The hands of her were like white lilies on the strings when she touched them last night. I could have knelt at her feet for joy that we have found each other."

"It is good to be you, Kurithir," said Flann, who was a king's son. "May you hear the thrushes sing."



AND Kurithir went back at sunrise, and watched her window in the tower until her face looked down on him. Speak she dare not because of Aevil and Moria. Go to him she could not for the locked door and the key on the chain of Moria. But look at him with all

her heart in her eyes she could and she did, and a white rose she let fall from her breast to his, and that was the first gift of Liadan and Kurithir.

That day was fair with beauty, and all went riding gaily to a neighbor castle of friends, and gaily home at the setting of sun; but Aevil put Aillain, the son of her host, to ride with Liadan, under strict word that their visit would end if he heeded not her order — for Liadan must either be guarded, or sent home at the dawn; so Aevil rode with Kurithir and talked much with Flann, and was a sweet and gracious lady to charm all. But Liadan sat quiet, smiling ever like sun touching mist of the morning. Her heart was full of joy only to hear his voice, even though the words were to another — which is Love itself.

And that night was a very poet's night of a young moon and the scent of dew on the hawthorn, and under the tower Kurithir sang, and touched the harp, and this was his song:

Sweet-scented branch of silver
Abloom above me,
Lean low to love me!

Gray bird of harmonies
Honey voice, morning star,
Wake to love's dreaming!

His voice and the strings of the harp were whispers soft on the night, yet in her heart every whisper was held, and the fury of Aevil was as a storm seen afar in the valley. For Liadan was as snow on the mountain shining in the sun.

When she left the locked door of her chamber, the dark woman, Moria, carried her shuttle and thread, or her tablet of white birch and the stylus, or the tiny harp of the six strings, but not apart the length of a spear did she walk, and she listening.

But the love of Kurithir forced him to the speech of a man to his mate, and he spoke.

"The song of the night was to you, Liadan, and all of me calls for you more strongly than song can be telling. Liadan, marriage is well for two singers who find the same song. It is by that choosing the bird of the forest seeks ever its own mate, for the song is the soul of the winged things. That is so of the birds and it is so of men, Liadan. Thus the nightingale holds his song pure in rapture, thus the children of us will sing our songs, and their own songs, in the future years, Liadan."

The soul of her moved to him that she trembled, but the dark woman, Moria, behind the arras, was ears for Aevil who walked the garden with Flann, and Liadan veiled her gray eyes lest he read them too well, and spoke in sweet courtesy.

"Fair friend, it must be in the rath of my father I give troth to a man and not in another place," she said. "That gate will be open to you on a day to come, and your singing will win you fair welcome when you are coming there."

"Your words are as snowfall at harvest time and the sheaves golden," spoke Kurithir. "Your eyes make themselves shadows of gray and are veiling their sweetness. But I am servant of Liadan what day of days I may ride her way through the forests."

"The day may be long — the length of days rests in the heart itself," said Liadan. "A far circle of visiting is pledged to the friends of our father. That circle must be closed ere we welcome poets or princes at the portal of our own castle."

"Honey mouth, the sweet coldness of you would freeze the red rose, and all its flame could not save life to it," he said. "But within me is a deeper flame, and I

wait my day, and I wait some sign from you for speech again."

But the bodkin of the dark woman touched the arm of Liadan through the arras as a warning against other words, and she spoke no more but bent her head over the harp as if alone, and Kurithir looked at her, pondering, and then called for his stallion, and rode alone and apart from the rest that day.

But Liadan rode not at all lest the hand of another man touch her hand, or the hem of her garment, or offer her cup which another than Kurithir had kissed.

But the harp of his in the hall was the only one she touched that day, and she wished that forbidden druid power could be hers to charm the strings into speech for his ear alone. With bodkin she traced one word in *ogham* on the harp frame, but Moria watching! More she feared to do, and her tablets of writing had been broken in the rage of Aevil.

The dark woman told to Aevil all that discourse of the day, and Aevil laughed her victory.

"Tomorrow's sun takes us away from this place and this blind-eyed poet," she said. "I have a secret to tell, for Flann has desire of me, and a king's rath will yet be my abiding place. But I choose to be away from the roof of my father ere these poet songs again make night sleepless. My marriage comes before her betrothal. See you to that!"

The dark woman promised and praised the maid Aevil, and had joy of the thought of Flann who was king's son and of power to be.

At the supper time, Aevil held up her square cup of mead and asked a good wish on the road for the morrow. Her journey of joy was a circle, and their chariot must start with the sun on the round.

There were words of pleading from many, but Kurithir said no word, only stared at Liadan for a sign — and she there frozen with the grief on her!

It was the first word she was given of the journey, but he could not be knowing that, and his pride was a cloak as he stood before her.

"Sun-rise or sun-setting makes no change in me but to leave me in darkness," he said, "and the servant of Liadan is ever her servant."

But Aevil laughed at his shoulder, and bade him not practice poet's art for the sake of practice, for Liadan knew the light worth of a rhyme — and herself turned all things, from cock crow until moonrise, to such usage!

Then she sent Liadan to her chamber on an empty errand, and laughed again at Kurithir, and watched him, and his face white.

She knew that he felt hate for her, and would sing grief and disaster on her but for the bond of one father and sisterhood with Liadan. The dark woman plucked her by the sleeve and whispered warning lest he do that thing and shame her before Flann and the host. Aevil was green-jealous and was going far!

But the laughter of her scarce touched him, for the reason that he saw only the face of Liadan who had gone past him, dumb and without word of courtesy, and she hard struck at the fear of great forest and wilderness between them.

It was that fear made her bold to dare what she dared not do before the people. No tablet of writing could she send. No secret friend could she trust in the castle of the Dun of Dearg where Aevil bore casket of gifts for service rendered.

But more quickly than Moria could follow, she sped to the enclosed garden where the red May rose bloomed

against the south side of the wall, and close under her linen shift lay a blossom of it before the dark woman, with dark words, grasped her wrist, and drew her within the portal.

"The fury of Donal your father will not be a summer storm to you if he hears of lovers of yours before the Lady Aevil has her right as a wife ahead of you," she said. "The visits of honor are spoiled by the endless twanging of the fool's harp, and of yours, and the end of it is coming!"

Liadan knew there were dark words said of Moria in whispers by the people of the hills of Kerry. Her love for Aevil was a real love, but her hate was a thing to fear, and the soul of Liadan trembled, yet the thought of Kurithir brought back life to her, and she spoke.

"With your hands you will not touch me again," she said, "and this to your warning. As a child I mind me how, for curious reasons, you sang sleeps upon me at noontide. I saw strange things in the sleeps you sent me and some I remember. But I am not now a child and my life is a different thing to me. No will of yours shall be on me again, nor the will of any other mortal, save one only—and I loving that one. My duty to Donal, my father, and Aevil, my sister, will be paid in silence. But to the man who gives me heart-love there has been too much of silence, and the end of that is coming!"

The dark woman looked at her sideways and said no word lest the maid grow wild and run shrieking, or do some other ill thing to shame them. For the words of Liadan told her it was a woman deep in love who spoke, and that at once both her body and mind were sacred to her as love's offering on an altar.

And Moria went from the chamber in fear of the wrath of Aevil if the lovers met, and in fear of other things! The

key on the chain was forgot at her girdle, and it was the first time.

At the foot of the turret stairs she remembered the key and would have turned back, but Aevil was there and heard her story and smiled.

"Wait for the locking of the door," she said, and frowned and thought. "Since she is turned rebel on our hands, and a dagger is forbid, we will try other ways, and ways will be found. Her poet is sick with love and mooning alone, yet far enough from the turret. Keep you ward, and send to me Aillain, son of our host. He mutters poems of hers instead of grace."

IT was true Kurithir was alone, and a new thought with him for company. The next house of the visit of the sisters was that of a friend where a welcome for him was ever waiting. Yet at this time he would not ride there without a castle servant to ask his presence. But on white beech tablet he was writing that friend to send for him quickly, and his own servant was put on the road with it, while the others played chess, and took pawns, and looked love to women, and Aevil laughed, thinking that he wrote poems on dull tablets when he could find more human pleasures. Flann laughed when she laughed, and knew nothing of the heartache of his friend. After their words on the cliff there had been no more words between them of Liadan or of Aevil.

Their laughter sat ill upon him, and he moved to a casement where he could see the window of the turret chamber, and perhaps a light there.

No light was showing, but the soft note of the little harp was heard, and its sweetness was dear to him, for it was his own song of the night she had caught.

"It is well Liadan is playing that," said Aevil. "All the day she was making practice of it because you, Aillain, gave it praise."

"I?" said the youth Aillain, and stared, and his mother heard and laughed.

"What does a manling do when music is made by fair lady to his liking?" she asked. "A gold-caged thrush would be fitting for a lady's gift, or flowers for fragrance."

They made jests of him as at a lover they were training for love, and the eyes of the youth laughed also, yet he was courteous.

"No less than my duty, and the gift, shall be offered," he said. "The less garden bloom for the other ladies on the morrow."

Straightway he started for the garden in the dusk, glad to show grace to so fair a guest. The sky had primrose tints in it afar, and the golden curve of the moon was above dark ocean. Only one star shone high, and shadows fell thick where the hedges were, and where a great vine threw wide arms at the foot of the tower.

A moment the boy paused to look up where the harp strings were softly touched, then there was silence, and a white hand reached far out, and a bit of fragrance touched his breast — it was a red rose, crushed where it had lain under the linen of her warm bosom.

The youth was mazed and stood waiting with staring eyes. Was it a mocking the gay group would make because of his lack of years, and his height of a man? This was the reasonable thought, for he had a sweetly gay temper of his own, and was used to their baiting.

But while he held the rose and listened for their laughter, something finer came to him: it was the hushed voice of Liadan singing. A very whisper of a song it was, and heard only by him, and by a man at the casement.

The mystic rose are you to me
In secret bower growing,
The grayling bird of grief am I
Not joyous taking wing!

One star for both above the sea—
The trysting star! A grayling
Lets fall a rose and breathes her sigh:
Not joyous taking wing!

The voice ceased and the harp strings gave a wail as a heavy hand of discord crashed it. The boy could make nothing of that, and walked slowly into the dusk of the garden, intent as before on the gift of blossoms.

It was a sweet song as she sung it, and a pleading one. He wondered as to the meaning of the mystic rose. It was a new word to him and he had an ear for words of beauty.

Then there came swiftly the rush of a slender form into the garden's dusk. Like a low-flying bird before a hawk she ran, for the dark woman was at the portal.

"O rose of flame," said Liadan sobbing, "that I should have given snow for your fragrance!"

The tall youth, Aillain, had plucked a hand full of bloom, but stared at her strangeness, and drew back from her.

"The roses are for your gift, fair Liadan," he began courteously, but at his voice she moaned in terror and caught his shoulder.

"O rose of brief bloom for me," she said, and fell in whiteness at his feet. He bent to lift her, but the dark woman was first.

"Silence is best for this," she said to Aillain. "It is no new thing and I can bear her alone."

She was very strong, and Liadan lay in her arms like a broken flower, and thus she faced Kurithir at the portal; he was white as the maid, as he barred her way.

"Tell me of this meaning," he said, and Moria laughed as Aevil herself might have laughed.

"You are a man and should know," she said. "The boy is a new plaything and she broke the lock to keep tryst with him. You poets play over much at the love game, and oft choose your mates strangely."

"If you were a man my hand would send you to hell for that saying."

"Even that would not make her over, or change the heart of her," said Moria. "Give way that I may put her back under lock ere her sister learns this newest shame."

He gave way, and paced like a chained thing the length of his leash under the wall where he could see the light of her window. He listened for her voice, but no sound came.

Later he sought Aillain, but the youth had gone straight to Aevil in his amaze and fear, and she had cunningly bound him to silence, as if Liadan were some distraught creature ever to be guarded when the moon was new. To Flann, Kurithir could not speak.

IN the morning Liadan was dressed by Moria for the journey, listless and cold, staring.

Aevil mocked her despair, and hummed the words of her trysting song.

"Think you a man of pride waits for tryst with a maid

so bold?" she asked. "The rose alone might have won a hearing, but men are fain to do their own wooing. Your song argued practice in love, so he walked away, O grayling, you!"

Liadan took up the harp and broke the strings.

"It will make songs for no other man," she said. "So much for love's practice on me!"

Cold and white she sat for the braiding of the gold disks in her brown hair, and cold and white for the girdling of the gray robe, and the lacings of the gray shoes. After the breaking of the harp Aevil mocked no more, for there were guests and a host to face in the farewells, and it might prove a hard hour.

But Liadan strangely bade farewells as a child is taught to do. There was a faint little smile on her lips, and she looked into faces as if scarce seeing, while the dark woman watched her curiously.

"Her boast was that no will but his should lead her," she said to Aevil. "Look you! Whose will leads her now?"

"What thing have you done?" asked Aevil, "for his is the one face she does not lift her eyes for. What druid's draught have you brewed for her?"

"No draught," said Moria. "She gave you fear when she broke the harp, and that was the time to give her the quiet. Look not fearful, a weakness is on her from these days, but weakness goes again in youth."

Liadan was seldom gay, and none but Kurithir and Flann noted her stillness. Neither spoke of it. And so she went away from them. And the music was stilled in Kurithir. His harp was laced in its cover of otter's skin, and the message she had writ on it was hidden — to their sorrow!

When word came from the friendly house that he was ever welcome there, but that the Lady Aevil, and her

sister, the poet Liadan, had not come their road, he bade farewell to his friend Flann and took a boat for the sea.

"The thrushes do not sing, even for poets, on the sea," said Flann, and that was the first time he mentioned the dream of love of Kurithir.

"There are no longer thrushes singing for me in the shadows, and no dreamhouse of love in any forest," said Kurithir.

STRAIGHT south he steered and then east, through storm and stress seeking new ports, seeing new faces, hearing new songs but singing no more. Women looked on him with warm invitings in many a harbor, and one of sweet words and gray eyes sent him out into open seas against wind and tide.

"Other men are not remembering like this," he said. "Back of the look in every woman I see the look of Liadan, O lost gray bird of mine — Liadan — Liadan!"

To say her name brought her before him strangely. He leaned forward in the dusk and brushed his hand over his eyes as if to clear vision.

For there in the prow he saw — something! It was the faint gray shadow of a girl with a broken harp. The harp he could see very clearly, for the broken strings were black against the green-white foam.

"Liadan," he whispered, and moved to her, but white spray dashed between them and no other thing was there. And that was the first time she came.

"She is dead," he said, and the world was more empty for the thought, yet strangely enough, when sleep came

she began to come very close to him, and very warm and very much alive.

In the dusk of starlight he saw her, shadowy, with his earthly eyes again and again, and at times he thought the fragrance of hawthorn and roses of May was on the sea.

"Is it the way of a madman I am going?" he asked himself, "for there can no more be fragrance of roses here than there can be songs of thrushes."

And that night in sleep he heard the thrushes! It was together they heard them—her hand in his, and she listening.

And the words he said to her there were words he had never said to any woman in life. Her eyes shone on him like warm stars, and it was as if they had both been waiting always for the words and the hearing of them. And in the dream he sang to her, and she within his arms warm there. In the morning he remembered that song—and he remembered whispers of hers between the lines of it.

O Liadan!
O mist of honey fragrance!
Within my dreams,
You drift the night with me!

You are the star
Old sea reflects forever,
You are the grianan within my heart.

The white-breast bird are you,
The whitest rose,
The ever-singing harp of silver string.

You are my secret,
Breast unto my breast,
Until the lark shall call the sun,
O Liadan!

It was the first time song had come to him since he sang under her window at Dun Dearg of the sea cliff, and all the

call of his heart for her was wakened in new strength. He turned the boat and steered west and then north, and every twilight she sat in the prow faintly gray, and in every sleep his head rested on her warm bosom, and warm arms were holding him, and her face was bending over him with her eyes looking into the depths of his own.

"Even though it be madness on me I will follow the way it leads," he said. "I will go as bid to the rath of Donal, her father. I will put out of mind all else I saw or heard, for mystical things and deep things are sending fair winds to me at every turn of tide, and never a day but the seas are glittering fair like silver."

And it was so. Never a storm touched him after the night he saw her first.

In the nights he smelled hawthorn and May roses over the dark sea, and there was one night when he was off Arran, and she sang to him, and in the morning he remembered her song as well as his — and this is what she was singing that night:

I dreamed of the yew tree,
Its sheltering shadow,
I dreamed of your arms!

I woke to the thrushes,
Their song was to nestlings,
And your arms about me!

Then he felt her stir as a bird might stir against a mother-bird's breast, and her kiss was on him, and in that

kiss he smiled, fearing to open his eyes, fearing to lose the dream of her. But he whispered in a dream song:

My eyes are in shadow
But sun in my bosom,
My world — Liadan!

To dream true is — loving,
Gray eyes of enchantings,
Gray lark of sweet singing,
— Your music to me!

Into the deep harbor of the cliffs he sailed on a fair morning, and men with shields and spears watched him as he climbed the heights, and Flann was first with the greeting.

"The summer raiders of Lochlan came down the coast to wreck and plunder," he said. "No roof is left of Castle Dearg; we drove them off and sunk half their fleet, but much evil was done by them. Our host and his people are dead, and Donal of Dun Conchinn is dead, and many other good men have gone the Way."

"It was to the rath of Donal I was going."

"It is a late day to be going; death has been there, and veiled women are there."

The heart of Kurithir went cold with fear to ask a question, and he did not ask it, but walked silent beside his friend until they stood under the portal of the tower where all now was blackened ruin from fire and stress.

He looked up to the window and then mounted the stone steps to the chamber where once she had slept, and Flann in silence followed, for their hearts had been close-knit.

The furnishings were gone and it was a desolate place.

"Come away," said Flann. "There is no profit to a man in seeking empty cages when the singer has flown."

But under the carved stone seat by the window, where no fire could touch it, there was a little harp with the

strings broken. Kurithir knew that harp and every broken strand from the nights on the seas to the south.

Flann took it up and looked at the frame where "Liadan" was set in silver wires deep in the dark wood; with the haft of his skean he scratched it until it shone bright.

"It is true," he said, "I thought it was a woman's lie to mock me — but it is true."

"Who was the woman?" asked Kurithir.

"It was Aevil," said Flann, "and now with this before us, and Sun and Day, and Earth and Wind, to witness, I will speak you the truth. When you sailed south and gave no farewell to Liadan, who turned her eyes from you in parting, I rode to the rath of Donal and made offers for her as a wife. My promise to look another way was broke when you two parted and no pledge between broke."

THERE was silence for a while and only the eyes of Kurithir spoke.

"It was all no use," said Flann. "She would not say the word for all Donal's anger. I know not what his words were to her — God knows! He was regretful for the words when dying and said it to me. But before that day he offered me Aevil instead, and ordered Liadan to the veiled women, and Aevil was a star of beauty, and was willing, and I took her."

"And what was the lie of this?" asked Kurithir, holding close the harp with the sweet name of her on the frame.

"It was no lie. It was the truth. The harp was broke by Liadan that no love song should ever be made on it after her tryst song to you—and you walking away from it."

"There was no tryst song to me. The woman Moria carried Liadan from tryst with another—and mocked me that I was yet sick at heart for her love."

"There are dark things in this somewhere, and there are false things somewhere," said Flann. "Aillain, the boy, is dead, and dark Moria is dead—it is late for the sifting of the wheat from the chaff."

"When were the deaths?"

"He in the first raid, but she, sabbath a week since, together with Donal, before our bowmen reached his rath for succor."

Kurithir remembered that day, and when Flann would have gone on with speech of the fighting, and the retreat of the raiders to their ships, he held up his hand for silence.

"That was the night she came to me on the sea, Flann," he said, "and that is why I am here listening. Darkness is on my mind—a darkness and a fog, but this is true as the Sun: the way of these broken strings was never told to me, yet I knew that her harp was broken, for at the sabbath twilight a week since, Liadan sat at the prow of the boat with the broken harp in her hands, and the smell of the hawthorn was there following, ay, and the song of the thrush in the nights!"

Flann peered at Kurithir in awe, and a swift chill touched him. When he spoke again it was with the soft gentleness as to a child.

"And where was this happening, Kurithir?" he asked.

"It was off the south coast, and I have been sailing straight to find her, night and day since that twilight,"

said Kurithir. "Never was there such a sailing, for the wind was ever with us, and I had but to close my eyes to feel her near and to smell hawthorn and May roses."

Flann looked down into the garden where ashes and a fallen wall covered the rose vines.

"The roses of May linger not for anyone through the harvest time," he said. "Come Kurithir, what I can I will do to bring you to her in time."

Kurithir followed after and carried the broken harp, and said over to himself words of her tryst song which he knew now was meant only for him.

"It will be in time," he said. "No human thing can part us now, for our coming together on the sea had no mortal touch to it, yet we were as one soul. Since she lives nothing can change that. She is the soul of me."

"She lives," said Flann.

More than that he had no heart to say, but while food, and horse, and servant were made ready for the journey through the wilderness, Flann spoke apart to Ronan, his cleric and confessor, who had been with the men through the battles, and shrived them as they went the last Way.

"Is it madness of the mind is on him, or is it some spell of magic that makes for him a vision far out at sea of that which is true on land?" asked Flann. "Is it evil, or is it good?"

"It has been both. The words of druids and the words of saints are witness. It comes between a man and a maid. It comes not of earthly marriage but rather of separation of the mortal body. It comes of great strength and of much weakness. Saints have known it to the glory of God's mysteries, but it is not for the telling to every asker of curious things. You have a kinsman in sanctuary who has the right to tell you more than I have right to know. The craft of idolatry, and the spells of druids, and power

of saints, have one likeness to the eyes of the unlearned. Yet is there a difference, and a great differing, too! The mother of Liadan was of the race of Dana, and she went the Way at the birthing. Her child came into life with the sign on her of secret knowings. It is a thing of grief that she was bred in the rath of that dark woman of Slieve Mis who could use arts of her own on a child of secret vision."

"You mean dark Moria, the nurse?"

"I mean Moria, the concubine of Donal, who went into death beside him. It is an old story and strange. The Dun of Donal is far enough in the wilderness to hide many secret things."

"You know that I have taken his daughter Aevil to wife," said Flann darkly.

"I do. You were swift about it, else I might have spoke caution. But the two are dead and God send that her evil died with her, and that your children live by God's grace. Judge you not Kurithir with harshness because of his own words. The darkness is on his mind concerning this matter. Few of us see as God means us all to see in His own good time."

"God be with us till the Day," said Flann.

"By the Elements, and the Father and Son," said Ronan.

THE raiders were gone from Connaught and the work of the chiefs was done there, and Flann rode south and told Kurithir he rode to fetch back his new wife Aevil, from Dun Conchinn, where death had been, and many shadows. And Kurithir scarce noted that Flann rode

neither in state nor in joy. He rode silent and with dark thoughts, and with few servants or comfort.

But he saw to it that none but himself held converse with his friend on the long south journey. And Kurithir went through the rivers and wilderness as he had sailed north over the sea, thrilled by the nearness of the sweet warm spirit of her.

IT was at rising of sun they reached the Dun of Conchinn, and saw marks of the siege on it, and it was Aevil who met them in the hall, vested in royal weaves and with a golden circlet of richness above the black braids where pearls were woven. Already she was wearing all gauds and trappings of queenship, and waiting jealously the day of the succession of Flann.

She stared in dislike at his company.

"Have you fallen to meaner estate that you ride home with none of the chiefs you led away?" she asked. "A servant and a horseman is small retinue for Flann."

"Greet my friend and send for your cleric," said Flann. "I have questions to ask of this household."

"I give greeting to any friend of yours, O Flann," she said, "but your words and your looks coming back with him are not those of Flann, the prince, who went away with his many men of the shields."

"If it is your will I will walk apart until granted welcome," said Kurithir to Flann. "It is you who know best the desire of my heart and the way to it."

"We will find that way," said Flann, "but the first thing must come first! Send your maids to their duties.

I want only your cleric, and his tablets for writing. It is your own desires I make plans for. You will not be wanting the enviers of a princess around you this day of your days."

Kurithir was no less amazed than Aevil at the curious speech of Flann, or at his long curious stare at the cleric with his tablets and his scrivener.

"Send your assistant out of the hall," said Flann, and went on staring, first at the comfortable, round old man, and then at the queenly woman he had called a star of beauty.

"Nealis of Desmond," he said, "it is a long time you have been in the Dun of Donal, and it is much you have seen of the woman who died with Donal, and it may be much you had to know of her."

Nealis, the cleric, went the color of old wax, and looked at Aevil, and Aevil flamed red while her brows were a straight black line of rage.

"What should he know?" she asked. "What should he know of my nurse and my friend? Why ask a man of the household and pass me by?"

"I asked for an answer—and I am answered," said Flann. "Fear not that you will be the one passed by! I will ask another question. Nealis, it is not the husband of Aevil who asks you this, it is the man who is Ri Domna of Erinn. Donal talked with you here when I offered marriage to his child, Liadan?"

"That is true," said the cleric, but his small eyes looked right and left like a trapped rat, fearing what the question might lead to.

"And it was that time the word went out that Liadan was dying of a secret ailment?"

Kurithir sprang to his feet, but Flann put out his hand in kindness.

"She did not die," he said. "It was a crooked plan but of her death there was no need, and the plan was changed."

He looked at Aevil, and the flame was gone from her face; she was gulping as if to strangle back some fury of protest.

"You were her confessor — also the confessor of Moria. You surely heard things curious between the two."

"What should he hear more curious than other priests hear?" demanded Aevil after one look at his pallid face.

"It is not your confession, Aevil, for which I ask," said Flann, "so rest you easy. But it may be easier for Nealis to tell the thing here where there are few ears than in open shame before the king and before his spiritual superiors. Nealis, was it drug of herbs Moria of the hills gave to Liadan, or was it the deeper craft of a mind chained until life and death was all one to her?"

"You are asking that which is not asked even by princes, and I would it were not asked," said Nealis. But his voice shook and Aevil glared at him frowning, striving to make him meet her eye, which he would not.

"The witch is dead," continued Flann. "I ask nothing concerning sins of the living, but this thing I mean to know. It is not best to depend on the grace of a Ri Domna's wife. There will be no queen of mine but by my will — and justice may come before my will, and before I come to a king's seat."

"Is that gray rat to come between you and me even with your marriage gifts on me?" shrilled Aevil. "The High King may say something if you take two sisters to wife at the same time."

"The sisterhood will come later," said Flann in great quietness, and at that Aevil choked, and the cleric looked at Flann.

"It is little use to speak, since knowledge has somehow come your way," he said. "I know of no drugs, but the Lady Liadan lived as in a trance when I was let see her.

I was told it was a love sickness and that life was hateful. To me she said nothing but that she was a shamed maid, and that the man had sailed on the seas, and away from her."

"She sees no man but you. Is she growing more weak as the days go?"

"No," said the cleric with the first straight look, "she has slept well, and smiles now — and her maids no longer fear for her."

"When did this begin?"

"It is strange to tell it, but the day of the battle with the Northmen was the day she changed. A swoon came on her, when the woman Moria died, but when she waked from it the trance look was gone. No fear of the battle touched her, so the women say. She is pale as a primrose, but she smiles again, and the maids now gossip that she sings in her sleep."

"You tell more than you know, and you tell it straight," said Flann. "She had lived under the black shadow of Moria of Slieve Mis until the life was smothered by that curse. When Moria died the shadow passed. Do you see, Kurithir?"

"I see and I know," said Kurithir. "She was seeking me that first day of freedom, and found me at the nightfall."

Aevil looked her scorn for the words she did not understand, and her look was black at Nealis of Desmond.

"There is one other thing," said Flann. "The mother of Liadan was known, and her race was known since Erinn had a name to it. But who was the first wife of Donal of Dun Conchinn?"

Aevil arose, trembling with rage, and her eyes glaring down at him.

"Keep to your seat," he said in the voice of a master. "I am to know these things and the reasons for them. A lady out of Spain was brought to these shores a bride in his youth, all are knowing that. But where is there some man or some woman to tell me when she died, and what of her children?"

There was silence and the breathing of Aevil could be heard as she leaned forward, her eyes on the cleric, and her hand slipping into the folds of her robe.

"I—I was not here at that time," he said, stammering.

"But you have seen records, you know?"

"It—is true. I—"

No more than that was said when Aevil leaped forward with a slender Spanish dagger crashing for his throat, but Flann was quick, and caught her arm. She struggled and fought, but he shook her as he would a rat and flung her to the floor, where she lay senseless.

"The dagger is a dainty toy and useful," he said. "It was perhaps for me she carried it." Then he turned to the wounded and trembling man, "Go on, tell it as you meant to."

"She knows," he said, looking down on Aevil in her rich robes and braided pearls. "The Spanish wife died, and died soon, without children. Moria was then what she always has been, full of one thought only, and that for her daughter here. Donal himself had fear of her, and made promises to her and kept them.

"But when men looked on Liadan they did not forget her. She came before Aevil, despite the beauty of Aevil, and of that the troubles began, and many of them. It was jealousy first, and after that there is no knowing what it was, but it has brought terror, and it has brought grief to this roof."

"Write this as you have told it," said Flann, "and call

the maids to look after the daughter of Moria. See that a guard is at her chamber door, and no more toys like this to play with."

Then he turned to his friend.

"There will be no shadow between you ever again," he said. "You have been shown all the reasons."

"There can be no more shadows," said Kurithir, and thought he spoke truly. He followed Flann through the hall, and to the grianan on the south wall; from there a troop of horsemen were seen lounging in the shadow, and four more with furnishings for women riders.

"It looks a holiday for gay gallants," said Kurithir, but Flann had no smile; he strode to the door and threw it open.

The grianan was no longer the lightsome ladies' chamber for broideries or games or music. An altar was there, and candles lit, and four nuns knelt where a priest recited a prayer, and their voices responded.

One voice out of the others pierced the heart of Kurithir, and he broke from his friend and called out in love, but the priest stepped between, and the eldest nun threw a gray veil over the primrose face he knew.

"Liadan!" he cried.

"Kurithir!"

She drew the veil aside, and the two lovers looked long at each other. But even with love in her eyes she put out her hand.

"It is for life, Kurithir," she said.

"I have come for you!"

"Flann, my brother, tell him!" she said.

"I knew of this," said Flann, "but had hope to outride the ending of it. This is why Aevil met us in queenly circlet and royal robes at sunrise to flaunt before Liadan a final magnificence."

"We are here to guard a new sister on the way to sanctuary of Clonfert," said the priest. "From this day she has no life in the world. Men are her brothers, women her sisters. There are no other human bonds for her."

"But there are bonds not human, yet between two mortals," said Kurithir. "I have gone through hell to learn that truly, and have sailed far over deep seas to bring the word to her."

"It cannot be said here," said the priest. "You are doing sacrilege in your speech. You disturb the spirit of her on her path to Paradise. You to your confessor for penance, and abide by his ruling!"

"Penance will I welcome for her sake," said Kurithir, "and some brotherhood will I find to give right of converse with this, my friend. For that I will wear the robe and go into silence forever after."

Her eyes were on his as she passed out the portal between the two nuns, and the look in her eyes was the look of the nights on the sea. Yet there was question in that look, and a wistful question.

Flann bade them farewell in the stead of Aevil, and watched them cross the plain into the forest.

"The evil magic of Moria lives on, even though her body is dead," he said. "It was she put into the head of Donal this business of sanctuary—and Aevil helped as she might, until this is the end."

Kurithir was silent, thrilled by that look, and dazed with the temptings to follow after, to take her and reach the sea and some land of foreign men, even though all the bells of Erinn rang their curses on him.

"Did you mean that as to wearing the robe of a brotherhood?" asked Flann.

"I would do more for one day of converse out of life with her," said Kurithir.

That night he abode with Flann, and when the late stars were going into the west, she came as on the sea and crept between his arms, and lay silent there.

No songs were between them that night and no words. She rested like a tired bird after long wanderings, and in the morning he told Flann of how it was between them.

"She will walk free in a walled garden," he said. "Peace she has and no fear, and in the Dun of Conchinn she had many and strange fears, and of them she would speak to me, and not in dreams."

"I am believing your word," said Flann. "No other man could, but I saw *the look*. In all of life I will see nothing again like that. My feet are on the earth, and my cares are of earthly things."

A RUNNER from the castle of the kings came to Flann at the breaking of fast, and he opened the seals of the tablet, and read, and took Nealis the cleric, and went to the chamber of Aevil.

"Daughter of Moria," he said, "the dower of a daughter of Donal shall be your portion. It goes with you for gifts to whichever holy home of cloistered women you may choose from out all Erinn."

She crested her head like a dark serpent, and her eyes were points of jet with jeweled disks on the band above them.

"My Spanish blade is not in my holding else there would be another man than you in line for the crown of Hugh," she said. "You would wall me from the world that the grayling rhymer come to you at last. Late it is

for that — and she under veil! All bells of church in Erinn would ring to damn you."

"Liadan is not in this, nor can be," he said. "You go to a cloister for a dagger stroke to a churchman, with thought to silence his speech in death. You could be killed like a wolf for that, and no one to make further question. But Liadan wears the veil to pray for sinners, and she would not have wish that you die in such sin as you have known. You go also into cloister lest you bring to birth a thing of poison such as your mother bred. You are of the women who know lusts, but not love, and such should not be breeding."

"What then of the love of that grayling?" she asked in mock. "What is the thing it breeds in men?"

"Its breeding will last while speech of Erinn lasts — and after! Liadan's is the mystical soul. Aengus of the white birds is the priest to hear her confessings. His is the key to unlock gates for Liadan where your feet and my feet may not walk."

Then while she brooded there Flann turned to Nealis the cleric.

"To you the records of this," he said, "and let me not hear even the name of cloister she is choosing. It is the daughter of Moria who enters that silence, and is not the wife of Flann. See you to that — and your life and her life to answer if there is mis-writing in this rule of mine!"

Aevil, glooming, took her last throw of the dice of fate.

"To the ears of Hugh the king this may go on a day to be," she said, "and he may make other ruling against an heir of his."

"The king of Erinn has no heir," said Flann, "and when the time comes, it is a clean woman he will be choos-

ing for the mother of heirs. That is a riddle for your reading."

But she read it quickly and stood up, and cried aloud.

"He is dead then—dead at last! And *you* are the king!"

"Since the sun of yesterday went down, I am king," said Flann. "I go now for the seat of the king, and the taking of the white rod."

HEVIL, daughter of the dark woman, took from her hair the gold circlet she was pleased of her pride to wear, and trampled it under foot in her rage at the thing she had coveted and had lost. She knew no record would be writ into the annals of Flann to show that when he was only a prince, and had gay journeys for his pleasure, he had ever taken to wife a daughter of Donal of Slieve Mis.

But of Kurithir there were records, for there was grief on Erinn when he put aside the music of the world and took a monk's robe for the cover of his youth.

And the day of days came to him when he earned indulgence of his confessor, Cummine, son of Fiancha, to talk apart in the walled garden, and the converse to be of things spiritual with a noble woman, and a youth between them as was custom with mortals in sanctuary.

And there Liadan came to him, and his hands touched hers after the long days.

"O Heart of me," she said, "twice have I made earthly tryst with Kurithir, and this time he is keeping it!"

"And the May roses in bloom, and the thrush again

singing," he said. "Speak again, speak, Liadan! It is long we have whispered in the nights apart, and now you are in my touch, and I would hear your living voice, Liadan."

"Kurithir, Kurithir, Kurithir!" she said. "There has been no music like your name written in my heart."

"Your harp is with me. I mended the strings, and the wind plays on them in the nights in my window, Liadan."

"I know," she said, "and I wrote 'love' in *ogham* on the frame of your harp, and you only found it there when you came back from the sea."

"That is true," he said, "and you knowing it! You are in the likeness of a flower, Liadan, yet are you strong as mortals are not strong, and you found strong ways to come to me over ocean."

"I was dying that time, Kurithir, and the death shadow was on me for the shame that you thought my tryst song of evil boldness. The dark woman had sent me in sleeps to vision for her the unseen things, and when her bonds on me were loosed, your bonds drew me, and I found the way to you. You were the stronger then, Kurithir."

"Liadan! Liadan! We have only this day."

"Kurithir, we have all the days forever, Kurithir!"

The sun went behind the world, and the birds called to each their vesper song, and the moon of May grew warm through the dusk, and the youth walked in the shadows while Liadan lay in the arms of Kurithir. Their litanies of love were murmured there, and ever the wonder that their souls had found the way of meeting.

"You were the mystic rose, O Kurithir. The fragrance led me through the deep to you."

"Oh, sweetest bloom! There was no fragrance on the sea till you were bringing it."

"You heard the music, too, O Kurithir?"

"With my lips on your rose-leaf body I was hearing it all the nights. You brought it there."

"It was like this — the clasp thrill of your hand."

"It was like this — the yearning of my mouth."

"Sweet dream — O Kurithir!"

"It was like this — O Liadan!"

THE moon went down, and the stars of dawn broke on the world, and a veiled woman who had once dreamed of Erinn's crown stood watching two sleeping lovers in the convent garden. A youth crept from the shadows at sound of her step, and lifted the discarded veil of Liadan.

He spoke, and the lovers wakened and smiled at the waking, and at the dear closeness of the other, but Liadan cowered in the arms of Kurithir at glimpse of the mocking eyes of the watching woman.

"Is it even to a cloistered garden that Aengus, god of Youth Dreams, brings you the key for soul mysteries, O Liadan of Kurithir?" she asked.

"The Liadan of Kurithir is a new name to me and a proud one, sister. Shadow there may be on it, but no shame."

"By the Elements, you dare it well, grayling, and well your lover! It may be the prior and the abbess can give vouchings for you."

Cummine came to them there at the bidding of Aevil, and shouted holy wrath at sight of the veil of Liadan.

"It was not told me that a veiled woman was the friend

he would converse with in this sanctuary," he said. "This is a shame beyond words to both our houses — and beyond penance."

"I could kill you here, Liadan, before their hands touch your sweet body, Liadan," whispered her lover. But she shook her head and took her veil from the youth.

"In that way we might lose each other in some dread darkness, Kurithir," she said. "But now we will never lose each other. Give me sweet farewell, O Kurithir."

"Liadan — O Liadan!"

"Kurithir!"

They bound him there and took him away for slow torturings and penance in a stone cell of the "Solitary Ones" on whom silence is put forever.

They stripped her in shame that she might walk in only her winding-sheet of the grave, and that walk was nightly, and her slender bare feet on the rough stones to the place of tombs. Before all the line of cloistered women she walked thus until the stones of the way were red from her bleeding feet.

After that they took her to a stone cell at the edge of the forest where holy women might not soil their eyes on her. Only her confessor and a poor lay sister came to her window there. She was under penance of silence, and writing-tablets were hers for speech.

She wrote prayers on the tablets, and she wrote confessions. There were times when she wrote poems.

The years left no trace of age on her — she was ever the primrose face of May. Marvels grew up around her because of that — and because of other mysteries.

At a time when the Danish raiders were stealing up the Sionan to the heart of the land, Kurithir wrote the number of their vessels and the number of their shields ere they had fared as far as Killaloe from the sea. When ques-

tioned, and told to speak, he asked that Flann, king of Erinn, be sent a warning and gather shields, for Liadan, of the cell in the forest, had seen them coming, and asked him in the night to send word to Flann the king.

When the men of Flann took the battle path and proved the truth of it by a battle with the foreigners, and brought back slaves and many spears, Flann himself rode to Clonfert and talked with the abbot there, and silence was lifted from Liadan and from Kurithir.

The son of a dead prince of Tormond was being disciplined at that time for the reason that he wished to revoke the gift of his life to the cloisters. The gift had been made by his kindred when he was a child, and was not binding on his soul. He had been with the spearmen for the defense against the Danes, and there was a wound in his shoulder, and he talked as prince to prince with King Flann.

"Since my days of a child I have lived this life, and the schools of it delight me," he said. "I have joy in the work of the annals and their making. I may come back in gladness to cloisters when the snow is on my hair, but they call me 'God's Dastard' for the reason that I would walk free into the world in my youth to win what youth may win."

"It was not always so with him," said his confessor darkly. "There was a time indeed when he was quite content."

"Yes, when I was a child," said the soldier-monk, but his face went white and he looked elsewhere.

"Come, tell me of it," said Flann, and walked away with him.

"You are a man and not a monk, Flann, and I can speak. I was a child here — it is not so long ago. I saw the love-night of Liadan and Kurithir."

Flann looked at him and the tears were thick in his eyes for the penance done for that one night of a May moon.

"Then you saw that which was holy, for there was no evil ever in the soul of Liadan," he said. "You will come to my castle and make books as you will, or range free where you will. I heard of the hard penance given to that lad to force his speech of that night."

"The scourgings were given, and were heavy," said the youth, "but the speech they did not get."

Flann took the youth away with him and later placed him back at the head of the province where his jealous kindred were dividing his goods and his lands.

So, by this and by that, Flann left trace of the heart-faith he gave to Liadan, and to his friend who had the love of her.

He lived as a king lives, and took to wife Maelmara, the queen of Hugh Finnlaith, who had no knowings of druid power or of jealous loves, and children grew around them to strengthen their bond.

But when the Night of nights was come to Liadan and Kurithir, and their souls met at last tryst, and did not come again to either body, it was Flann the king who did them honor. It was by his will that the building of their tomb was at the cell of Liadan in the edge of the forest where the thrushes sang.

It was also Flann the king who had their poems of love writ on fine vellum, and set in a golden, gem-crested casket, that the memory of Liadan might live.

But in the wreckage made by wars and plunderings of the men of Lochland the treasure books and annals of beauty were wrested from many a castle and monastery, and stripped of their cases of silver, and pale gold, and copper into which jewels were craftily set. Among such

plunder of priceless worth fell the royal gifts of Flann the king, whose memorial slab at Cluain-mac-noise is a wonder of beauty after the passing of a thousand years.

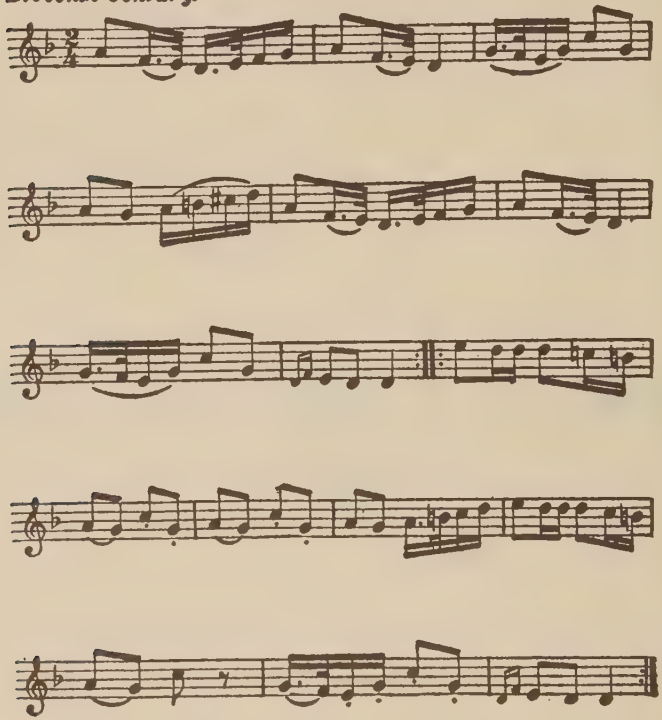
And of the veiled poet-maid whose soul he saw rightly, there has come down through the centuries only fragments of her love lines, and among them her wistful unashamed confession:

"I am Liadan
Who loved Kurithir,
It is true as they say."

DERVAIL
NAN CIAR

March of Battles

Eleventh Century.



DERVAIL NAN CIAR

(Dervail of the Shadow)

ARDAN, the fosterling of Donough O'Carroll, King of Orielle, watched with longing the carving of the stone as leaf, and bud, and traceries grew under the precious tools of Brother Cormac for the new temple to God and Mary.

"To me the doing of that work would be dearer than to wear robe and circlet of the king," he said.

"The cowl of a monk to you if cold stone contents your youth," said Cormac. "Hard and cold it is. The crown of a king means warm robes, and warm cherishing on snowy nights, and — and all the other comforts a king can command. Go you to your verse-making and folly. Your head is o'er soft if you would trade a king's crown for a mason's tool — and neither crown nor trowel yours for the trading!"

"But to dream beauty and then form it out of the stone — that is to be as one of the *Daoine sidhe*" (Gods of the earth).

"You will burn in hell if you believe in the pagan ancient gods; not even must their names be said. To make speech of them calls them near."

Then Cormac crossed himself, and muttered a bit of the lorica of Phadraig the Saint, and looked at the lad whose

face had a pale dark beauty, and whose gray eyes looked black under heavy lashes.

"Take clay and make your dreams," said Cormac at last. "If well mixed the mud will take all shapes. What are we all but the dust of the earth?"

"It is not in mud I see dreams," said Ardan, "but you give me a thought, O Cormac!"

THE white snow of the past night lay, rose-tinted, under the path of the early sun, and, singing low to himself, Ardan began to gather the whiteness on a great slab of gray stone near the south wall.

"It will not be mud of which I build my dreams, good Cormac."

The monk watched him idly for a while, and then tossed to him a trowel from among the tools of the builders.

"It will take no harm from the snow," he said, "and will save your hands. But make your play quick, for the sun travels north to bring the end of the cold moons."

"You mean he comes to wake Cethair, spirit king of the forest, out of his winter's sleep," said Ardan. "Cethair but breathes over the fields, and all the snows melt, and all of leaf and bloom comes out for his carpet of green fragrance."

"There is no king but King of Heaven and Turlough, Ard-Ri of Erinn — our own kings of Leinster and Orielle, and such," said Cormac, but Ardan was deep in his new play and had no words of argument. Once Cormac looked and saw he had set upright a slender straight sapling of yew in the packed snow of the slab, and once he noted that

the hands of Ardan stripped from the sapling all but two branches reaching out east and west as the arms of a cross, and after that Cormac carved at stone traceries, well satisfied that the fosterling of King Donough was, after all, but making a holy thing.

That was a comforting thought to the good Cormac, who had love for the lad who was known only as Ardan of Ardbreccan, and whose stay near them had not been so long. He had been the ward of the holy and learned O'Cahsahde of Ardbreccan, where his childhood had been lived between gray walls, and under the great oaks' shade. At death of that holy man, who was called "Dall Clairineach" and known of all scholars, his ward Ardan, with wealth and comfort, was left to King Donough with instruction that he was the son of a mother whose dying hope had been that sheltered holiness be his share in life; and no more was known of him than that.

But his breeding spoke of gentle blood, and Maureen the queen made choice of him for comradeship with her own children, and her own maidens in the garden games, and the gracious sweetness of him won its own way in king's palace or monastery walls.

IN the shadow of the wall he made his snow form—that the rays of gold of the sun not melt the white of it; and Donough O'Carroll of Orielle, and Diarmod of Leinster, his overlord, passed that way and spoke of the handsome boy and his destiny, for the work he did made him look like a monk, and his father had been known only to the holy Dall Clairineach of Ardbreccan, where many

sons of princes wore the robe of scholarship and holy sanctity.

The two kings went their way, and Cormac was called by Duighal the prior to another place, and the boy was forgot by all, and the snow image was not seen by any until the morning after, golden lances of the sun touching it when coming first over the edge of the green sea.

And then, at sight of it, Cormac the monk cried out in awe, and his cry called others from the chapel.

Duighal the prior was there, and the two kings were there and Ardan stood in the shadow of the wall in a queer trembling of joy — and mayhaps some hunger, for he had worked till the setting of the moon, as in a trance, fasting.

"Is it a miracle of Brighde, the Foster Mother of God, as the blessed mantle was given her?" muttered the prior, and others thought it Mary, Queen of the Elements. But Diarmod the king stood beside Donough and stroked his dark beard, and his eyes shot green fire.

"A miracle it may be, holy father," he said, "but the miracle is in the gift given the mortal hand placing it there. Where is the Ardbreccan fosterling who heaped up the snow on this slab but yesterday?"

Cormac the carver of stone pushed forward Ardan, whose teeth chattered as he knelt under the eyes of all the brethren and the two kings.

"This is the lad, your royalty; always he is making the coaxing word for my edged tools that are not for a child. It is true I tossed him a trowel yesterday, but this thing of whiteness with jeweled robe of dewdrops could not have been formed by mortal hand and mason's blade."

"Speak, if you did it," said Diarmod of Leinster.

"Of snow I did it with a tool cut from wood. In the light of the moon I worked on the mantle with clear water from the well. The freezing water there made the jeweled

fringes to the robe — it was no miracle, O King, and I will do penance that I made the thing on consecrated ground. The fever took me to work, and I asked no permit."

"You need ask none forever in Leinster," said Diarmod. "Rise up to walk where you will in our domain, and work when you will."

There was a buzzing as of bees among the monks who looked at the lad and at the white limbs of the snow creature, tip-toe with wide-spread arms like a bird lifting for flight. The mantle of it spread from wrist to wrist across head and shoulders and hung truly like jeweled wings in the early risen sun, but the white breasts and limbs and body were bare against the mantle save for the girdle of maidenhood.

The prior Duighal was the one with a frowning face at the words of Diarmod, and he looked from the king to the white wonder, and then to the faces of the monks, bent and shifty-eyed as they glanced sideways at each other, and then at the white snow of the round breasts.

"Penance for all whose eyes are smitten by the sight!" he thundered. "This is no holy thing — no white picture of saint: it is the work of the Evil Father forming temptation! What wench has bared herself for you that you know the way of that?"

His staff was lifted as in threat above Ardan, who gazed, round-eyed, at the faces of the monks, and the holy fury of their shepherd. Donough O'Carroll stepped between the lifted crook and the builder of the mystery.

"Look again, holy father," he said. "The boy has not been tempted; that understanding is elsewhere."

"My word with Donough," said Diarmod. "The lad says he worked in a fever a day and a night —"

"And fasting, too, your royalty," said Cormac.

"And fasting, too," said Diarmod. "Look at him: it

might be words of foreign tribes we speak for all he understands. Look at him! It was only a game of chance that he formed a virgin maid instead of a white bull — or a white fawn of the forest."

"But the bulls roam the hills uncloaked," said Donough O'Carroll with a laugh; "so also does the fawn and its dam. Speak, lad — we know it was no wench came to you here in the cold of the night — and to a wench no girdle would be given. How got you that mystery as you got it? This is sanctuary — you can speak."

Ardan stared at the listeners like a trapped thing, and then knelt before Donough.

"I am under bonds as a son to you — and I meant no evil. I have the mind dark on your meanings. I crave your pardon, and the pardon of your queen for her fosterling. It was at the bathing pool in the summer time. Her maidens were in the water, and like that she stood tip-toe on the high stone at the pool's margin. Like a bird with wide wings she stood ere the mantle slid from her shoulder. Proud she stood, and I from the thick green of the other shore saw her thus — more of beauty in her than snow and ice can tell! I went deep into the forest that day — lest they see me and deem me a spy on their pleasure-place. That is all, O Donough! If I have done a wrong deed, I ask to atone to the priests and to the maid."

"Her name has not yet been spoke," said Donough, and Diarmod made a quick step forward and laid his hand on the head of Ardan.

"To your feet," he said. "Is there name to a living maid for the double of that? Is there a name?"

Ardan turned his gaze from the eager king to Donough, and then to the frowning prior.

"If it might be spoke in another place?" he plead, but the prior lifted the staff.

"Here in this place where the evil thing was wrought," he thundered, "here begins your penance with open confession before all!"

Ardan turned to Donough O'Carroll.

"If first I could speak of the word to you alone?" he said.

But Donough laughed at the pleading, and lived to know sorrow of the heart for that laughing.

"As you have shown her breasts and her body to us, give us the name."

"But—let me entreat—"

"The name, lad, the name! What is she called?"

"She is called—Dervail."

The voice of him went low as the breath-whisper. Yet it was too loud for Donough, whose face was thunder-black and threatening.

The prior heard and turned on the monks, with words of censure for hearkening, and his orders brought them to heel like a pack of hunting hounds on the wrong trail.

Diarmod heard, and his eyes, with the strange green fire, narrowed as he looked at King Donough.

"What sweet hidden thing have you put away for holidays, good friend?" he asked. "The lad only spoke in whisper, yet the sound of it echoes among you like a thunder-clap in the hills."

"It is not hidden by choice of mine, Diarmod," and the voice of Donough had the gloom on it. "We will to break fast and then—"

"The lad at our table for the food!" decided Diarmod. "Look not so down, lad, because you held beauty in your mind more close than most of us. The monks today dare not bury you alive as they once did to sinners. Their forbears would have left you pinned to the earth for a smaller thing than a naked virgin in their cloister—even the prior will have dreams tonight!"

Then he walked around the white figure to see the solid backing of the cloak to the slender body, and smiled at the craft of it. The mystery of it was going, yet he glanced from under his brows at the lad, and had wonder.

"Lucky for me that I abode the night with you, Donough O'Carroll, else would I have missed this in life," he said, "and no man can hope to see it twice. This will be a melting day, and the wind has turned: it comes the sea-way since the dawn."

"The sea-way," said Ardan, "the eastern sea-way — the path of sorrows."

"Why do you give that word?" asked Donough O'Carroll, staring at him.

"I have no knowing why I spoke it," said Ardan. "I thought I heard it somewhere. And look you! It is true: I fasted and half froze to build that while the joy of building was with me — and like a white jewel it was when the sun touched it this morn. But the sun ray is gone, and the wind of the east brings the melting with it, and the jewels of the mantle are dripping tears already — tears! I should have wrought with metal tools in stronger stuff."

Cormac had come back with a stout, long stave under orders of the prior, and stood waiting in courtesy the going of the two kings.

"Go you to your food, lad," he said kindly; "the tools you shall have at need. But go you, for your fasting gives you the sight of things you know nought of at all! The Hidden People of the Ancient Days are putting speech on you; go to food, and drink, and human thoughts."

"I would rather do that," said Ardan. "I had the Dream of things with me when I built this, and my heart would sorrow to watch the white of it melt gray in its own tears. She is still the white bird tip-toe for flight!"

Donough O'Carroll looked at Ardan as if he was seeing

him for the first time in life, and Diarmod the king tore himself from the gazing, and strode beside Donough with the swing of the man who had found things easy in life.

"Diarmod MacMurrough, have you given heed to the words you have heard beside that white wonder image?" asked Donough.

"I have that. Some of the words are as full of wonder as the image itself," said Diarmod.

"Take them to your remembrance then, for no idle words were said there. That boy had the right knowing, and was right in his silence, but I made him speak. It is my grief."

"It is no grief of mine," said Diarmod, and laughed as one who holds his own thoughts.

AT the angle where the path narrowed to the portal, Donough, in courtesy to his overlord, stepped a pace aside and behind. A sound came to him of wood striking on wood, and he looked back, and he was glad the lad was making reply to some asking of the king, and did not see the thing he saw.

Cormac was doing well his task: the white wings were shattered, and the slender white body broken. There was nothing left of the Dream but the dark cross of the young yew tree dripping drearily against the gray stone of the wall. The wind from the east carried the melting mist with it, and there was no longer any sight of the sun anywhere.

Donough O'Carroll went into his house that day with a heavy gloom on his face — a strange gloom for one shown honor by his overlord.

The woman who loved him looked her amaze that he put aside the bread she offered, and called first for the wine at morningtide.

"Let be, Maureen," he said, and spoke to her lowly. "Take your heed of our friends if I limp lacking in courtesy this day. I feel 'fey' with some happenings of the morn, and would that you send best messenger and swiftest horse for Kieran Dall of the caves. The king must be told some truths and some sayings. And it must be a holy man, and a wise one for the telling."

THE coming of Kieran Dall was at the nightfall, and the O'Carroll had a day of fever and fuming with his overlord who had moods of haste for the thing he wanted.

"Why should the name of a strange maid so witch your thoughts from Mor na Tuathal and the daughters of princes?" asked Donough, and Diarmod laughed his happy laugh by which hearts had been won.

"Why should the lad who knows not love have made her his Dream? Answer me that, and you will have your own answer! What put silence on the monks when her name was spoke? There are mysteries in it, and riddles are sometimes witchery."

"Mine is not the telling of the riddle, but it will be told for you," said Donough.

When the supper was over, and only the two kings and the blind monk called Kieran Dall were in the great room which was for private and secret things, their talk began.

"It is for a curious thing I have sent for you, O Kieran,"

said Donough of Orielle. "With me is my friend, a hunter from the south. He is a MacMurrough, and I want him by my side when I hear the story of the maid called Dervail nan Ciar."

"That maid is of your fostering, since the death of Ethnea your sister, to God her soul! She is called the ward, or the daughter, of Murtagh of Meath — is Dervail of the Shadow. Beauty was hers by birth, and wealth is hers by a dower of fear. Of that you should know somewhat, O'Donough, as you should know why the wife of Murtagh has fear of her and would give all wealth of the valley of the Boyne rather than have her under the roof of Meath. What new thing can a hermit of the caves have for your worldly knowing, O Donough, prince of Orielle?" said Kieran Dall.

"It is not of the new I would hear — it is of the ancient old. It is of the prophecy; it is of the reason why that blood is feared and must not repeat itself in Erinn. It is the year and the time when she was to go from my castle to the walls of holy sanctuary, and the dower of fear to go with her."

Diarmod, stretched on a pile of wolf skins in the glint of the firelight, looked up and gave Donough a smile at that. But the sightless eyes of Kieran could not see the look, or the mockery of it.

"True, it is the time," said Kieran, "and the reason of it goes back to the dim old days when men who walked the world took mates ofttimes from the Hidden Tribes. Aye, that was the way of it more oft than in the days in which we live. The dark mist of the earth-mind was not so thick between us in them times, and there were other matings not to be spoken. Women of the sea and wolves from the forest have helped man bring forbidden lives — lives without souls — on the earth. The saints know it,

and God knows it, and the tribes of that people have often strange evils in their blood."

There was silence while the blind eyes stared into the red ash as if seeing visions.

"How far back can you be going into the dim days of that time?" asked Donough.

"The mind can go far back on paths where speech must not follow," said Kieran. "To give words to things gives power to them as well. To give names calls up the shadow — white or gray — of the soul that answered to it on earth. That is a true saying. And there are them not to be called back — the names going out in shadows! Under a like shade the child Dyveke Og, called Dervail, was born into Erinn. Her birthing belonged in another land, and not here — not here at all.

"Among the druids of the dim days there were sacred things, sacred rules, and names, and priests who were kings. I am not naming the name of one, or the name of his tribe, but there was one who was Highest, who was given 'the sight,' yet the rules were broke by him, and broke for a woman who brought temptings. The name of that woman is not to be spoke, but she was a queen in her own tribe — and it was a tribe of the blood of the wolves of Alba. To Erinn she fled as for sanctuary — and brought her temptings. The madness of love she brought on that priest who was king, and he was netted by her as a fish is netted in a deep-sea net — and was borne by her kinsmen across the sea to their land. Her kinsmen were the barbarians of the east, and he was held by them as hostage while Erinn paid eric in skins of the deer and otter, and gold from the rivers of the west. That is how it was until a helot of Alba made way through their traps and their walls and brought the word to Erinn; and a sad word it was, for there was no truth in that people! The priest-

king, netted through love, had neither feet, nor hands, nor eyes left to him. Their women tortured him, yet kept him alive as mockery of a king, for a king of Erinn must be without blemish. Speech was left him, and nothing else of a human was left him. He made a rune, and word by word the helot learned the words of it and brought it to Erinn. A long rune it was, too. And first of it was that no further eric was to go out of Erinn for him to the red brutes of the eastern shores. He alone, by his death there, would pay the price of his fall — but it was worth the summer and winter of torturings if he alone could pay for the lesson to Erinn, and to the men of Erinn. He laid on his own clan a heavy rule that by Sun and Moon, Earth and Air, Fire and Water, and the lives of their children, no bond of faith be made with the men of Alba, and no marriage with a woman of Alba, for the blood was not the blood of clean people, and the eyes of that people had no vision of clean faith in bonds of fealty.

"In that rune he had the vision of the greatness of Erinn if tribe by tribe they made bonds only with each other for the glory of Inis Fohdla, which, even in far ancient days, was named that — the Isle of Destiny."

"Why is Erinn, in the ancient runes, called by that calling?" asked Donough.

Kieran Dall shook his head.

"I do not know. God knows! Men who named the stars called it by that name, and had 'the sight.' A land was given to the Hidden People, who were great people; they have not known death, yet have never left the land of Inis Fohdla. In the years ahead they will again have a birthing, and the hidden things of the wise are in their keeping until that day. For three centuries Erinn has been the school for the sons of Brythen and France, and other foreign people. The Dane invaders were driven

home by Brian of the Tributes, and Inis Fohdla pays tithing to no viking of the foreign in our day; it may happen that we are near to reading the riddle of Inis Fohdla and that naming; it may be so if the faith is kept in peace, and the rune of that king of the tortures be not lost again as it was lost by Cuan the Dark in the days I hold in memory."

"Who was Cuan the Dark?" asked Donough.

"He was of the blood of that priest-king of the rune; he was also of my blood, but his own name is not spoke. He was of the sacred line into which no blood of the enemy must flow lest it bring the curse of a thousand years' helotage on Inis Fohdla."

There was silence as the slow words of the blind hermit sunk to the minds of the two kings.

"A thousand years!" muttered Diarmod. "How could Erinn be held as tribute-payer for a thousand years to a king of the foreign? Thorgils and Ota the queen did hold the Sionan and many harbors, and the tax paid to the Danes was a heavy tax. But years more than one hundred are gone since there was taxing like that. How could it be coming again?"

"I have not the sight for that," said Kieran. "It was the prophecy, and the penalty spoken in the ancient rune if that line of the kings should take mates from the red-wolf women of Alba."

"But — it was of one line alone — one family — or one clan," said Diarmod.

"Aye — it was one alone, but that one was the sacred line of the priest-kings. Their rule was the rule for the men of the crown and the temple, and the people of lower rank would follow. It was before the time of christian men in Erinn. It would take more than the time of one winter night to tell you all the difference in minds and

lives between that day and this day. But through all the changes the line of Cuan the Dark kept to the law of that rune — eight times one hundred years was the time it was held to and the line was clean, and the record of that line was proud.

"And then?"

"Then the young had the teaching that no thing could be truth but the truths spoke by the saints of the New God, though truth was in the world before Mary came to the birth.

"Truth is truth for always, and even the pagans had many true things in their hearts. But the young are light of mind, and do not see these things. So it was with Cuan the Dark.

"To Spain he sailed for a matter of import, and I was beside him. To the land of France we went, and I walked the lines of mighty Carnac, and thought of kindred wonders at Knocknarea in our own land. There were women everywhere, and they were the days of his youth, and he gave them love, and good-will, and farewell! So it was with us, and home he sailed, glad and free of heart; and it was here in Erinn he met that trial he was to meet. He broke the *geis* laid on his line, and on his birth, when he looked on Dyveke the Dove, child of Gorm, son of Knud of the rath of Knud.

"The mother of Dyveke had been a woman out of Alba, blue of eyes and flaming of hair, and in her own land she had been to the front with her kinsmen in battle. But Gorm the Dane had his way with her and stole her to sail the seas with him, as was well-fitting, for each was of a tribe drinking from skulls at their joy-feasts, and fierce alike in their lovings.

"Sons they had, but they never kept life long; that fierce mother held her strength for her own passions. There

was a saying for that among the Danes. Then Dyveke came to birth, and the mother went out of life. It may be there were fairer things on earth than Dyveke; but I never saw them.

"Dyveke means 'dove' in the wording of her father, Gorm, and no breast of dove was whiter, and no flight of dove had more of grace — and no love-call of a dove had more of music than her voice.

"From her grianan she smiled down with look of longing on Cuan the Dark, who sat on his black racer below, and the madness came on him there for that look and for that woman — and the madness stayed.

"None of his elders was there — I alone who knew the *geis* was there — the *geis* every son of our line was bondman to.

"But he was deaf to my words when she spoke!

"A noble of the Danes named Thorold had heard, in the far north, of the beauty of her, and came with gifts and with offers. She took his gifts and gave him love looks as she gave to Cuan the Dark. The boats of Thorold the Dane were anchored in the bay, and the word went out that it would be with Thorold she would sail as wife.

"That was the day Cuan the Dark changed to a wild thing showing his teeth — the girl Dyveke had looked love on him, and he had that madness.

"I made him listen to the record of the ancient horror when a woman of Alban birth had brought death in life to a prince of his line.

"I held him as I reasoned with him, speaking over the names of the men who for the hundreds of years had taken the vow and the bond for his own life, and the lives of his children. He fought me and growled back that the vows were pagan vows — not christian — and not binding on a christened man.

"I spoke the rune of the priest-prince who had warned his clan to make no bond forever with the fierce Albans of the jealous eyes:

. . . . . .

Thus shall it ever be:
Honor and sanctity
Shed on the sons of Eire.

Sleep with the sword between
Sons and a foreign queen!
To daughters the blue dirk's sheen
Sooner than blood unclean!

For Fohdla the Fair
Hold blood and the land,
Else victors of Erinn
Swarm red on her strand!

For eric is breaking;
For soft heart in taking
A mate out of Alba
A thousand years' snare!

A thousand years' yoke
On the bent neck of Erinn;
A thousand years' tribute of blood,
Inis Fair!

"That was the *geis* made binding by the priest-king in exile ere they cut out the tongue from him, and left him to rot when his clans heard of the maiming and sent no more gold of the ransom to the woman who had netted him. She was a queen; she had heard of his beauty and his sacred knowings, and had the jealous eye for that which was too fine for the vision of her people. Aye — she netted him and tricked his clan to pay eric against the day of his return. And in the end he fed with her wolfhounds, and was torn to death in their fightings. That is how it was; but he had the clear vision of the future years before his

going! That rune I told, and the vision I told, to Cuan the Dark that it make strong his *geis* to hold against the charm of Dyveke the Dove."

"Did it hold?" asked Diarmod.

"It did not hold. He broke from me and shouted that there were christian bonds between Erinn and the ancient enemies to the east. He would follow the christian bond, and make a forgetting of pagan *geis* laid upon princes of his line. That is how it was. I was the one who sent for the elders of our house, but it was too late. She was in his dun at Cualann ere their coming. There it was the men of his line put against him the ban of the unnaming, and the forgetting. That is where her lover, Thorold the Dane, stood him siege for her and made break in his walls. The curse of the *geis* came in quickness to Cuan, for it was the hand of Dyveke, of the whiteness of doves, by which a knife found his heart, and his head was tossed by her from the tower to the feet of her lover, Thorold!

"With Thorold she sailed out to sea, but the girl child she had borne to Cuan after that beheading was hid in the cell of a monk who was let near for some shrivings. Thorold was raging like a maddened bull for the death of the child not his. Two were born that night. One was dead; it was given into his hands, and the fierce soul of him was content with that, not knowing. But Dyveke, the white, knew somewhat. She had heard the unnaming and the ban of his clan against Cuan for her sake. She had heard the *geis* of the rune, and she had bitter hate for the banning of her, or of her blood, and it was a bitter curse she put against Erinn at her going away, and a bitter prayer she made that the seed of Cuan might raise up hosts of wolves to tear each at the throat of the other till the *geis* of the rune held true, and Erinn was broken, and her neck under the foot of the foreign men of enmity."

The two kings looked at each other across the light of the fire and Diarmod turned to the portal as if a cold wind had struck him. He moved more close to the hearthstone and drew over him a robe of otter skin.

"And that was the ending?" he said.

"God and Mary knows! Mayhaps it was the beginning! It was the year Adrian, Pope in Rome, signed the grant of Erinn to King Henry what time he could win warriors for its conquering. The conquerors have not yet sailed from Alba, but the eyes of Alba are jealous eyes, and the grant was given the year the child of Cuan, Dyveke Og, came, born living, into the land of Erinn."

"Young Dyveke?" repeated O'Carroll. "That name for her was never told me."

"Your sister, the Lady Ethnea, had hatred of it, and Dervail was the name she made choice of instead. The mother of Cuan had kindred in the Ua Machflain, and to King Murtagh went the Lady Ethnea with concern for the dower and station of the unwelcome woman-child. A dower was given for her life in sanctuary, and that dower was doubled by Ethnea who had love for the father of the child. The ward of King Murtagh she has been called, and it may be she is thought of his breed. But Duighal knows she is Dervail nan Ciar, who had no right to live; and King Murtagh has no longing to see the evil face of her — she is of the shadows, and to be forgotten in walls of sanctuary — and the walls built high."

"It is the first full hearing of the child I have asked for, though I had fear of the truth," said Donough. "From the monastery she was taken to the castle of Ethnea, my sister. At the dying of that sister, she was brought to Maureen, who thinks her a bud of the tree of Machflain of Meath, to end in the convent of sheltered women."

"Aye — that was hope of the prior when he gave pen-

ance to the monk who carried that white wolf's whelp to his cell for safety! Aye—the years pass, and she has reached the age. No sons and no daughters should come to Erinn of that breed of Dyveke. I saw what I saw of the broken *geis*, and my hair went white in that seeing, and for that the fear is on me for that breed."

"Then it was not in the young years the sight dark came on you, Kieran of the cell?" said Diarmod the king.

"It was not in the young years. It was by the hand of the one love of my kinsman, Cuan the Dark. Her lover, Thorold, found me out where I was putting a cover of earth over his headless body. The brute men of Thorold held me, and her white hand drew the hot iron across my eyes. She was hard, jealous, and she forgot nothing. She was Alba! She had the name of Dyveke the Dove, and her looks were sweet looks, and her voice had the music of birds, but her heart was the heart of her foremothers who ran with the wolf pack."

Diarmod laughed low. "Your words are not the words of a priest of Mary," he said. "An army of men with your heart would be a good army for battles."

"Battles for Erinn were dreams in my life," said Kieran. Dyveke knew the dreams, and let me have my blinded life for the mourning of them! I wear the robe and do penance for my sins and for the sins of Cuan who died unshriven. But there is no sin in the strangle of a wolf, and no seas would be too wide for her following if I had but the sight. May she burn in hell all the years there is shadow on Erinn!"

"Be it so if she brings that shadow," said Donough, "for that is no sin to say."

"Truth for you! And the same to all who would walk in her thoughts! In the name of the Elements, and Mary, and the Father and Son!"

"In the holy names," said Diarmod the king, and rose and stood by the fire with the otter skin robe about him in a quick tremble of cold.

Donough O'Carroll looked at him, and poured wine from the flagon into a jeweled cup.

"To your warmth," he said. "We have talked the fire low on the hearth. Empty the guest cup with me for comfort of the body."

Then he poured a cup for Kieran, thanked him and asked what gift he could give him for the story of the blood of Dervail nan Ciar, whose true name was Danish dove.

"Give your gift to Erinn for me, and make your own choice of that gift," said Kieran, "but let it be a good ship to take the wolf's whelp as far out of the land as the shores of Egypt, and that is a far sail for a good ship; or failing that, build a wall of stone, doubled, around the convent where she is barred from the sight of men. If she has what her mother, Dyveke, had, say prayers to Phadraig and to Brighde that the curse of the eric be not laid on Erinn."

"That besides the doubled wall?" said Diarmod, who was warmed by the wine, and spoke lightly.

"Aye—besides the double wall! The paying of that eric is beyond thought. It is the yoke of a slave and a thousand years of blood on the bent head of Erinn!"

KIERAN was led to rest by a servant of the castle, and was not told that Diarmod the king had been a listener to the tale of the rune.

Diarmod paced the room and quaffed another cup of the red wine of Gaul.

"Is it not enough that the priestly rules are ever near to ban anything of beauty coming a man's way?" he grumbled. "But a hermit must bring runes of a thousand years to strengthen that ban! The tale would witch a man to follow her if but to see if she had the wonder in her of Dyveke the Dove — and tame that wonder as a falcon is tamed for the wrist of the master."

"But that is a bird you will not take from its cage, Diarmod?" said Donough. "Take to memory the *geis* of your own line against the hunting of birds — it is more than a thousand years, yet the bards are telling the legend even in our day — and it was a white bird in the legend, Diarmod, a white bird coming to earth with love-words and warnings to your ancestress, who was queen — and this white bird of the cloister you will not be seeking cage for, Diarmod?"

There was silence but for the crackle of the new wood heaped on the fire, and Diarmod looked long into the red heart of the flame before he spoke.

"No, Donough — one veiled maid of the cloisters brought shadow enough and blame enough to me — that is long since, yet never forgot."

"It is Dhira you mean?"

"It is Dhira. Rest to her soul! She was robbed from me again by Dall Clairineach and hid in shadow to her death. No, I will not take another maid from convent walls — and no guest of yours from your castle; but if she is fair of body as that white mystery in the cloister, it is as well I have not crossed her path a-nutting in the forest."

"You put light in my heart at that saying, Diarmod, for I saw the thought of you. But there are women always for you; women a-plenty."

"Of a sort," said Diarmod, who had to wife Maelmor na Tuathal, sister of Laurance the saintly, and a queen-woman

in her own way, and a pious, of a sort, "but white birds with reaching wings do not wait on every road for a man."

Donough O'Carroll went to his rest with content that night, and unburdened the cares of the day to Maureen, his wife.

"Get the maid, Dervail, on the road to sanctuary of Cluain-mac-noise in the dawn of tomorrow," he said. "Our shelter has not kept her name from the ear of the king. Strange happenings have been, and curious portents. She is not one to win friend for any king of Erinn."

"In truth she is the fairest thing in all your province, Donough, my heart," said Maureen, "but, like a bird, she is — untamed."

"Do not make that saying of her to me," said Donough, "or sleep could not come to my bed this night. Too much I have heard this day of bird-women, both doves and falcons, and I would that the maid was ugly as a mud-hen among the bogs. Woman, let me have sleep, and pray that Saint Brighde speeds her in safety on the road from us tomorrow. If she is in truth of the blood of Murtagh of Machflain, King of Meath, the time has come for his claim of her. The mystery of her is abroad on the winds, and the very name of her sounds temptation to Diarmod!"

IT was in the mist of the gray dawn when Ardan crept like a thief down the turret stairs, and to the castle wall on which the grianan of the queen gave entrance. The door of it opened from within, and to meet him came the maid called by Maureen the fairest in all the kingdom of Orielle.

Like forest pools were her eyes — gray with a glint of blue; her mouth was the rose for beauty, and her hair held the warm flame of red gold; heavy it fell either side of her face and reached below her girdle. A cloak of royal blue touched the stone floor, and a veil of silvery gray broidered with blue was held by the wire-spun circlet of gold about her head. The falling of that silvery veil gave her a strange mystical look to Ardan, and the dignity of the cloak hid every maidenly curve of her young body.

"Argatonel," spoke Ardan as he stood staring at the beauty of her, "'Silver Cloud' in truth you are, Dervail; and you look as if you had slept in a fairy's rath and woke changed and not young any more."

"Sleep I did not at all — for the doom of going away was put on me ere the turn of the night. That was the time I sent the maid Kauth to seek you. The castle of the holy women at Cluain-mac-noise is to be my prison. Some sudden thing has stung the prior, Duighal, and his monks are to be my guard to sanctuary. It will be my grave they take me to!"

"I am to blame — to blame!" said Ardan. "I, too, must go a road this day, but it is to the Culdees of Saint Hilary. For my fault I am to study in a new place and among strange scholars."

"Why are you to blame? You that were my comrade?"

"It is forbidden that I tell you all, or think of it — but I made an image of snow like a white bird that yet was a maiden. I thought of you and made it all of whiteness, but like you, too, in beauty. It was in the cloister. Duighal the prior says it is an evil thing to image any but sainted women, and a penance is put on me that I go."

"But you — you have no unhappy heart at that going," said Dervail, and sighed as she looked at him. "You will walk free to make other beautiful things in other places."

"I will remember you in the far places, and the beauty I make will be thoughts of you."

Dervail smiled on him with closed lips and eyes peering sideways through the silver veil. The veil made a new mystery of her face.

"Argatonel," he said again, and was thinking of a rhyme for it to make a poem as a farewell gift, "Argatonel!"

"You do not love me, Ardan," she said; "you only love beauty."

"But you are that beauty."

"You do not love me; you do not know I am alive! You look at me as on a saint, high on the church wall. I would rather dance free with the Ever Young People in the Hidden Hills!"

He did not know what to answer. Cormac had said hell waited for people of pagan thoughts, and Cormac had a soul of good intent.

"You are my best comrade, and as my sister," he said; "my grief is much that you go unwilling — I would that you went not out from here until a marriage feast gave you to some righteous king. You look like a queen with that cloak and the veil of the silver cloud."

She laughed a little bitterly.

"I said you did not love me, and I said true; you are almost of my age, yet you would pick a king out of the world for me! I steal ere the dawn to seek farewell of a poet, and his only seeking is a rhyme for my name — not to be found!"

"But I have found it!" he cried in triumph. "I will write it for you ere the troop leaves the portal. I will sing it in the lonely west where I go for scholarship. Dervail, what other thing could I do to show my thoughts and my heart to you?"

"I do not know. It is a boy you are, and my thoughts

are of a man's thoughts. Look: I am cloaked and shod for travel; there are swift steeds below, and there are boats at the sea's marge. Beyond where the low sky takes the silver of morning, there is another land. Had I the strength of a man beside me, it is there I would go."

"With the troops of two kings of power to claim you for the church? Who would dare give shelter to you in such flight?"

"Two kings?" she asked, puzzled and frowning.

"Diarmod of Leinster is guest of King Donough."

She laughed again.

"So: that is why I have been kept to the grianan of the queen for three days! It has been so always when guests of might are housed here. What crooked stick of the forest am I that no prince or king must look my way?"

"The fairest things of earth are God's offerings, Dervail," he said. "I think of you as abbess of some white sisterhood of Mary. On some day of days I will surely see you so, and kneel for your blessing. You will be ever the white bird and the silver cloud to me."

"That makes the cold stone no softer a pillow," she said. "You live in dreams — sometimes you have made me see the dreams, but this no dream today. They take me for other prison and call it serving God!"

A clink of metal on stone sounded above them where the flying buttress carried a windowed room as a canopy above where they stood.

Dervail sped quickly back out of sight, but Ardan stepped further out to look above. What he saw there was Diarmod of Leinster with his finger on his lip. Horsemen clattered through the castle gate, and Ardan looked down at them from the edge of the wall.

"The castle is awake, and there is no other moment for speech," he said. "My heart goes with you on the road,

comrade maid of mine. May that road lead you to peace!"

She stood looking at him moodily while he lifted the hem of her cloak to his lips.

"Almost I see you here a queen in the queen's grianan," he said. "You look it in that robe you wear. Have you no farewell to me, Dervail?"

"For that I came, Ardan, and may it be so to you! I would you could teach me the content of dreams — my dreams lack content. Farewell, comrade! In the gray days I will think often of the white bird by which we are exiled. Fare you well, Ardan! Go you the way of your white dreams!"

There was a weariness in the sweet voice. So few days before she had run races and tossed the ball in the games, but the Dervail in the silver veil at the dawn was a different maid.

The veil — the silver cloud — Argatonel! — in a moment more he had out the inkhorn and quill and was tracing on the smooth stone the first words of the rhyme singing in his ears — he had promised her a verse of farewell.

The sun has set at morningtide,
Argatonel!
The wall between is high and wide,
Argatonel!
Above it stars of heaven may rise
In witchery,
But none so bright —

The rhythm of it sang itself, and he was glowing with eagerness when he became suddenly conscious of someone near, and turned to find Diarmod smiling at him in great good humor.

"I had joy of my eavesdropping, though I could get no glimpse of her face," he said. "Anyone seeing your tryst might have had his doubts, but I'll go your warrant to any

father alive who has sweet-voiced daughters in want of a playmate."

Ardan bent knee to him, and thus turned from the words, roughly noted in ink, still wet. Little escaped the eye of Leinster, and a step took him beside it.

"What's to do here? 'The sun has set at morningtide.' That is against nature. How could that be?"

"My King, I cannot make you see it when you did not see her face — and she goes at morningtide."

"So, that is it! My grief, to hearken to a tryst with a lad when it was the strength of a man she gave call for! And this — Argatonel?"

"It is the silver cloud of the veil she wore — the veil by which she was hidden from you above."

"Very good — it looked, indeed, a veil of silver over hair of gold. Go on — finish your lines. Here is a scrap of vellum of no import; write it across that. Your craft is curious, and has interest to me. You shall write love-poems for my daughters. Go on! 'But none so bright — '"

And Ardan, encouraged by the king's mood, plodded placidly on.

> But none so bright as are your eyes
> Of mystery.
> Argatonel, white wings to you!
> Argatonel, deep heart to you!
> O Silver Cloud, that wraps the world,
> God's Sun to you!

He finished writing and read it aloud, and the eyes of the king were on him curiously.

"That, and a maiden tryst at dawn, and you fasting!" he said. "What works then might you not do with good meat under your ribs? I've a mind to take you with me, if only to feed you, and watch your growth. Come! We'll talk of it and eat. Clean white vellum shall be yours for

your love-lines, though the maid read you true, my young cock-robin! You had no heart-love to give your Argatonel; your only seeking was some fair thing to sing about."

THUS it was the friendship began between Diarmod the king, and Ardan, the fosterling of King Donough of Orielle, and thus it was that they went out together at sound of the gathering guard in the castle yard that morning, and from the shadow of the portal Diarmod looked on the unveiled face of Dervail.

The rising sun touched her hair to a glory, where it fell in braids to the saddle cushion. The deep pools of her eyes held shadows, and the black lashes were wet against her rosebloom cheek, yet the head of the silver veil was not humbled, and her chin was lifted in pride as she looked about her on the household back of the spearmen, and her maid, and the page holding her restless steed as it pawed the earth, and grew restless under the tinkling sweetness of its bridle bells.

"Truly you said it, Ardan; she is the sun at morningtide," said Diarmod the king; but when Ardan attempted speech in reply he was silenced lest a note of the music of her voice be lost.

"Think of me as Regina in that new life," she said to Queen Maureen at the farewell. "I wear the blue mantle that Mary the Mother may see I serve her in a royal way. The gray of life has no liking for me, and to the last I will wear colors of the deep sea, and the sky."

"What a queen can do will be done that no gray robe is yours until the day you make choice of it," said Maureen

in kindness. "A writing to that end goes with you to the holy women."

"All have spoke a farewell but yourself, King Donough of Orielle," said the girl Dervail, with proud coldness in her voice. "I give thanks to you for years of sanctuary. Am I to have no host's gift of the stirrup cup at my going?"

"A white road, and a white welcome to you," said Donough, whose tongue was stiff with fear that she go not quickly enough. The wind of the morning had caught the silver cloud of her veil, and swept it back over the golden circlet; she looked a girl queen beyond all queenly beauty, and too fair for the men of Leinster to view.

Donough waved forward the bearer of the cup and the wine, and lifted his hand to pour the draught, but Diarmod, who stood in the portal with Ardan, came forward, and the hand of Diarmod was before that of Donough.

"That the right may be my right," he said and filled the cup.

The servitor dropped to one knee, and the King and Queen of Orielle bowed low, and Dervail saw them, for the first time, stand aside for another man in their own castle keep.

The wonder of it filled her, and her lips opened for question, but Diarmod stood at her stirrup. He gave to her the verse of Ardan and lifted the cup, and when their eyes met she forgot that a king and his household bent low while only one man stood.

"Will you not kiss the cup?" he asked. "It is my grief that it is the farewell, and not the welcoming."

With both hands she reached for the cup, with both hands he held it up, but their eyes never parted. Their look was a long, strange look, and the smile was gone from her face.

"I speak thanks to you, O my lord," she said, "and the cup of parting will be remembered by me."

The prior rode through the portal with six stalwart monks at his heels.

"I go north for pilgrimage to the shrine of Phadraig," he said, "and we will add guard to the new nun for Cluain-mac-noise.

He did not look at her at all, and his speech was to Donough O'Carroll.

Diarmod turned darkly on the cold-faced prior.

"Six of my own men will ride with you as far as the Shannon," he said. "They are the best of my horsemen, holy father, and will bear to the abbott a message. A gift will go to the abbess as a dower for the Lady Regina, for such is her new name in religion. This on the word of Leinster."

The prior stared at him, and bent head in brief courtesy. Never before had Leinster dowered maids, except they, in one way or another, were among his possessions.

But Diarmod, with full knowledge of the sharp ears and keen dark thoughts about him, followed his mood because of the red mouth of Dervail, and her trancelike gaze. He slipped a ring of gold from his hand and put it on hers.

"This my gauge of the promise," he said. "Let it go with the dower. In sanctuary pray for Diarmod of Leinster."

"Diarmod!" and her voice was a whisper of wonder, but her face held liking, and swift joy, and hope. It was plain to see that cold sanctuary was none of her choosing. "Diarmod, O some time Ard-Ri of Erinn!"

Fire of pride flamed in his eyes at her words. She had voiced his secret hope that the cloak of Leinster like the mantle of Brighde's legend might gain magic growth to cover all the land.

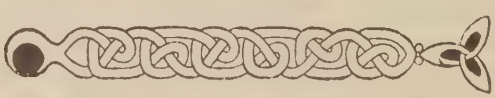
"The prayer of you for that day, O Regina," he said, and lifted the cup to drain the leavings of her draught. "By the Elements, I wish for you all you seek in life!" The emptied cup of silver he put in the hand of Kauth and stepped a pace aside as Duighal the prior spurred his steed forward, and spoke to Dervail without glance of the eye. He had known Dyveke, her mother, in her day of beauty, and had seen the christening of the wolf's whelp —also he knew the moods and loves of Diarmod of Leinster. Kindling for the pit of hell were both of them!

"Veil your face from the eyes of man, girl, and ride forward with your maid," he said.

Dervail lifted her hand to the veil, but lifted proudly her head as well, and cast one slow look over the awed group. Between the church and the king none dared speak, and Maureen grasped the arm of Donough in fear.

The eyes of Dervail rested last on Leinster and her eyes spoke for her as she drew the veil and shrouded the beauty of her face.

Two by two the riders passed the outer portal, and yet Diarmod stood, stroking his beard, and staring after the blue cloak and the shrouding veil.



"WHAT is your will for the day's hunt?" asked Donough at last, and Leinster swung on him as if to find vent to his humor.

"What joy in the hunting of deer when Paradise opens portals a man may not enter?" he demanded. "You played well to get my promise before my eyes had looked on her! You played well, Donough!"

"But the promise was a good one, and you will live to give thanks for the making of it."

"It will not be this day you will hear such thanks," spoke Diarmod shortly. "The beauty of her is beyond belief, and it is not her beauty alone! There is something — something —"

"True, there is," said Donough, "there is the beauty of Dyveke, her mother, but she is stronger than Dyveke, for she has the charm of the man named The Dark, because he was made Nameless, and those that were loving him could never see charm in another man. My sister, Ethnea, was one. Her life wore itself out making prayers because he died unshriven, and there is Kieran Dall, devoted even to vengeance if need be!"

"Oh, you make it strong, and I have given my word," said Diarmod, "but it is well it was you and the church I promised. Had it been one man claiming her — Murtagh of Meath or *any* man — I would be gathering a troop now to bear her back, and the monks with their prophecies might carry their runes to hell."

TWO years Ardan lived between the castle of Diarmod and the Culdees of Saint Hilary's cloisters, and then, with Diarmod's sanction and help, he joined a group of pilgrims for Tours, and thence on to see the glories of Rome.

Five years of books and songs and travel he had, but ever close was the craft of carving, and Diarmod's attempt to make him a bard, and a bard only, had not been a success.

"Let me work out my poems in stone if I can find them that way," he said. "Some need a pen, some need a brush and color for the telling, and surely the stone has its own hymns — and it endures."

"It is not a bad thought," agreed Diarmod. "If the ancient books had been carved of stone tablets the Dane raiders would not have carried away so many of the treasures. And in our own day O'Ruarc of Breffni is laying tribute on many an abbey of the north. The Culdees had best save their parchment and use the chisel."

"I saw him when I was a child at the ford, O'Ruarc," said Ardan, "and had bad dreams. He had only one eye, and an evil look. The monks told tales of him, but they say his castle at Lough Gilla has the riches of an emperor."

"Well may be! His men hold the fords of the north for heavy toll, and his robbings give him jewels enough to cover the many women he steals."

"As I mind him, he would get them no other way — none would go to Lough Gilla for love of him."

"Aye! But he has his ruler, strong as he is," said a monk of the north. "I heard of her in Armagh from a wandering bard who boasted that he traveled north in poverty, but by her grace he wanted for naught on his way back. Some message was his to bear for her, and he was fair delighted by the rare beauty of her. Songs he was making of her milk skin, and her gold of hair, until men fell in love to listen."

"Where found Breffni such pleasing treasure?" asked Diarmod.

"I know not — God knows! There are tales told. One is that a boat of the Danes was wrecked on the north coast, and she was of that wreckage. Another is that he

got her when he sacked the abbey of Clonard, and the new house of the nuns there. That may be. Her name is Regina, and that is no name of a Danish maid—it is christian name for a queen."

"Regina!"

Diarmod whispered the name under his breath and stared at the guest of the north, but Ardan cried out in horror of the heart, and turned to Diarmod.

"My comrade maid, the white-winged one of sanctuary! Is there word from King Donough as to that?"

"There is no word," and the face of Diarmod had brooding blackness on it. "To me he would not be sending that word. He would go first to Murtagh of Meath, and abide by his word, and the word of Duighal the prior. There is no love in their hearts for Breffni. It may be they care not for her taking, if she is taken far enough north—and the mountains and the bogs between!"

AFTER that, Diarmod said no more, but left guests and tale tellers and singers to have their own cheer of the night—and went to his own chamber. There he sent for Ardan.

"You have art enough to pass for a wandering singer, a cunning worker in gold, or a carver of stone," he said. "O'Ruarc adds to his craftsmen as he can, to change treasures of the abbeys into gauds for his women. Go you north into Breffni, and learn the truth of it. Here is gold for your faring. Guard your own life for me, but venture all else to bring me word."

"And if Donough is on their track?"

"No word to Donough of this matter! If she is safe again in his castle, or safe in the convent, come you back to me in silence. If the tale be true, find her and bring me word of her need."

SO it happened that Ardan had crossed the Shannon at Ath-Luin when the wandering bard from the north found the way to the castle of Diarmod, and craving audience, knelt and offered a ring.

"THIS from her who calls herself Regina," he said. "The dower given to the convent for her has gone to Lough Gilla Castle with many other things. The ring of the south should not be among the plunder of the enemy, and for that reason it is sent back."

"Is that the only word?"

"All that was given me."

"Is she — in prison?"

"She is the wife of Tiernan O'Ruarc, King of Breffni; she rules all within the castle by his love of her."

"He has then taken a nun to wife against all rule of Rome? Has there been naught of protest from King Murtagh of Meath?"

"Nay, O Diarmod, no vows had been laid upon her. She was free to be sought in marriage to any man, and O'Ruarc was the man."

That rankling thought was not good company for the man who had let her ride out from O'Carroll's castle into the new prison, and the man who got her was his enemy!

TWO days Diarmod fumed over the thought, and then rode with his spearmen and bowmen to council with King Donough.

"Is it in silence the men of Meath and men of Orielle let the plunderer from Lough Gilla strip the holy churches and carry away the cloistered women?" he asked. And Donough walked with him apart that Queen Maureen might not hear.

"As to Clonard Abbey, it is true, and we should stand against this, and send a spokesman to O'Ruarc; but as to women there was only one, and that one is his wife. There is no profit in going against that. She is Queen of Breffni and content enough. Since it is so, what call for speech of it among the people? It is well her own name is lost from her in those changes. To ride to her rescue would but bring her back for other princes to fight for. She is too fair for peace to be her dower in any land. Let that hawk of the north keep her safe at his own nest."

"She has brought him lucky fortune, since he sweeps all of church wealths into his chests and goes scatheless, and it was a different prophecy of her told by Kieran Dall."

"We are born, but not dead yet," said Donough, "and it is ill profit to think of her now — and her a strong king's wife."

"Yet I am thinking of her, O'Carroll, and the promise

holds me no more. From your castle I would not take her, nor from the church, but she is with neither. She and the other stolen things are now free to who can take them."

"No man will fight for her when her name is known, and Turlough O'Conor will not be the man to let Breffni be robbed of a covenanted woman. Murtagh of Meath knows it, and cares not how soon she brings ruin to O'Ruarc — if bring it she does — *he* is not of the line forbidden to her blood."

Diarmod glowered darkly and showed contempt.

"The short sight was on me when I let her ride away, and foolish was the tale of Kieran Dall. Strong houses have ere this taken mates from the Lochlannach. Why should a ban, forgotten for a thousand years, be uncovered for her house or for mine? My own thought is that her dower was the dower of a king's daughter, and a gain for any holy group of the veil. Without doubt she was a chance child of Murtagh of Meath, and the tale of Kieran Dall was made to fit. I have had no other word concerning Cuan the Dark; it is some old world tale of druid power."

"If ban, or banishment and un-naming is pronounced in secret against a man, it is more than death against him, Diarmod. There is no record left that he was ever living. The father of Dyveke had youth with him — he was the firstling of a devout house, and was meant for holy life — there may be many who think he is living out his years in work and prayer among foreign pagans. As a man he has left no name and no record. Now that O'Ruarc has the maid, and caused question of the source of the dowry, there is but one thing to do in the house of Machflain. She is called ward of the King of Meath, and daughter as well. It is a rich cloak to cover her white shoulders and cover a buried and bitter scandal for the house of the man called 'The Dark.' It will never be safe to

lift that cloak, Diarmod; too many pious hands have helped weave it, and work over each rough seam with careful broiderings. Hidden forever now is father or mother of hers. She is no longer Dervail of the Shadow; she is daughter of Murtagh Machflain, King of Meath, and is wife to Tiernan, Prince of Breffni. The whole of Erinn is between your shore and hers, and no cause for your thoughts to cross over."

"Yet are they crossing over," said Diarmod, and looked at a ring of gold. "There is no joy for her there in Breffni, and her own thoughts are crossing the wide land."

DONOUGH O'CARROLL was not easy in his mind after that speech. He had remembrance of the words of Malachi, son of Murtagh of Meath. He also was afire because of her beauty, and the little love he had for Tiernan O'Ruarc. He also could see no reason why the maid, and her dowry as well, should go to a prince so well hated. For the truth of her was not told by Murtagh of Meath to any of his household. Duighal and certain monks knew it, and among them they hoped to hide the fact that the child of Dyveke lived though she should have died. Some fear of Dyveke's curse was on Murtagh, and for that reason the maid was dowered for sanctity as had been his own daughter, with little thought that his enemy of the north would sweep hawklike on Clonard and bear away the troublous maid with all her mysterious wealth.

"Hark to me, Diarmod," said O'Carroll in all kindness. "Murtagh Machflain is well pleased that she is taken to the far end of Erinn by a man — any man — strong enough

to hold her there! You are not the only man she makes restless by a look, or a word, or it may be a pledge! If it is adventure you hunger for, forget her beauty and seek victories in the west where the men of O'Brian are ever snapping like wolves across borders of Connaught or Leinster; I am with you to join shields with Turlough O'Conor against them at any dawn you name to set forth. Make yourself strong with allies ere you venture a hosting into Breffni. With care you can be chief king of Leith Mogh."

"You have the King of Meath and all the bishops on your side," agreed Diarmod of Leinster, "yet if I was a wifeless man, I would make her a queen of more than Breffni. Tiernan of Breffni will yet pay with his life for having her before me!"

DIARMOD had never forgotten her words of admiring when she greeted him as "Ard-Ri of Erinn." It was but a tiny seed let fall from her rose-leaf lips, yet had it grown in his mind, nourished by the records and legends of his own royal line until he saw no head of Erinn more fit for crowning! This was a dear secret thought of his, spoken of to none, yet when he heard Turlough O'Conor called "King with opposition" there came flashing back to him the music of her words, and with them a long look ahead to the days when Turlough was gone! To be chief king of Leith Mogh — all southern Erinn — would seem to Donough a natural ambition. But to dream of the crown of High King over all would put fear in the mind of every friend who was loyal to Leinster. No thought of it had come to any heart but his own — and hers!

That was the hold she had over his dreams; she had voiced the secret thing much desired. And in his dreams she became a part of that which was desired — the beautiful part!

YET Diarmod of Leinster did consider the words of King Donough, and did join shields with Turlough against the men of O'Brian to the west, and did make himself allies for the days when need would be his, for that was his way. The strong family of Mor, his wife, he had in bonds to him, and strong churchmen he had; if ever he ventured to follow his dream he meant to have help of Rome through princely clerics.

He took credit to himself for joining shields to Turlough the king at that time. His mind was to go north, but the counsel of Donough brought him thought and remembrance that Murtagh of Meath was no strong ally even if he should make choice of the road of spears into Breffni for the maid of beauty. Though reinstated in his holdings, no one was forgetting that, for the blow to Gelasius the bishop, Murtagh had suffered for a space the loss of all kingly rights, and the devout and the spiritual fathers held it against him. It was no good time for making bonds with him, even if he and Malachi, his son, had been eager — for Malachi held no great strength of his own. The time must be on another day.

But in all his thoughts of her there was the curious certainty that their own time would come. She was the music singing far in the forest of a fairy rath; she was the veiled maid beyond the lattice; she was ever Argatonel, the silver

cloud out beyond the nearer gray! His men of the spears and battle-axes would have had curious thoughts if they had known that the music to which the great Diarmod of dread kept pace on his warhorse was the song of the boy, Ardan, in boyish praise of her beauty.

He had forgotten that song, or thought he had, but in some far corner of his mind it lay sleeping, and the thought of her whiteness in the arms of that red terror of the north wakened it, and gave it music until he heard the feet of his men and the feet of his warhorse marching to it!

AND the young maker of the song?

His travels abroad made the wandering northward an easy path. He slept at monasteries, and was known only as ward of "Dall Clairineach," who had been the scholarly abbot of Ardbreccan. But that name, given the learned O'Cahsadhe, was a key to every door. At Armagh, Ardan was even trusted with messages to other retreats of religious men further along his way, and at one monastery was offered a Saxon slave as gille, and a letter to Tiernan O'Ruarc, prince of Breffni, giving thanks from a fortunate prior to whom he had sent vestments and altar candles!

This lucky chance brought aid to Ardan and much comfort. He had only to say, "A letter from a grateful priest to a gracious prince." And over mountain or moor the message was given a pleasure path. Near his own domains the O'Ruarc did not plunder or lay waste, and the way to Lough Gilla was an open way when within the Breffni borders.

But the Prince of Breffni was not at home to receive the priest's letter of thanks. He was gone north to the shrine of Phadraig in Lough Dearg, as was his custom after great hostings. Even his enemies never could say the O'Ruarc shirked pious pilgrimage, or rich gifts of hospitality. The flat top of a great hill above Lough Gilla was seen afar as a landmark and named the "Table of Breffni." It fitted in well with the giant cromlechs of the ancients to which the Saxon slave made curious circles of respect, and told to Ardan the faith for which the ancient gods had left such monuments. It was different from the faith of the saints by which Ardan had been given instruction, and he chided the slave and made a prayer, and went on between hills touched golden by the carpet of gorse, and touched blue as peat smoke when seen afar along the fair waters of lake and river.

The letter from the cleric opened the portals of Breffni for Ardan, and his own youth and sunshine of face made him welcome alike to steward and warrior. The cleric of the castle was less friendlike, and had searching and priestly questions, and another man in scholar's robe gave long looks to him, but no question. He was called Duffagan, and had been of the captured at Clonard — a silent student to whom Tiernan gave care of the plundered books, because of his learning in such craft.

No word did Ardan send to Dervail, but with a bard of Breffni he made pact of friendliness, and told him of Erinn's music in monasteries, and the courts of princes in Gaul and beyond it to the east. An Irish air he had brought back from Rome set to words of Italy, and he sang it to the delight of all in the great hall. After the supper and the songs of olden days, the little harp was given to his hands, and he took his turn in making music, as was the custom and joy among those of the musicians and

poets. Young lovers would thus sing their thoughts to the one maid most longed for, and maids and women of the household of Breffni had their pleasure of the evening in that pastime. The castle took to itself neither silence nor added prayer for that Tiernan, the lord of it, had fared north for penitence at the shrine of Phadraig.

It was a gay and very beautiful hall where the music was made, for no stone of the wall but was covered with hangings of rich weavings from the lands foreign, and under foot were many skins of animals, and one of a great white bear was beneath the feet of Dervail where she sat on the throne seat.

At the far end of the hall she sat with her maidens, and the chiefs and ladies of Breffni's household. Wearily enough she sat there above the others, and brooding she sat in a robe of white, heavy with gold threads and girdled with green ropes of gold-set emeralds from the Kerry hills. Her veil was of white, and fell from a crown of gold and glimmering green jewels. Her chin rested on her hand, and she had a sidelong look for a chief who sat near her, reciting some late glory of her lord's victories.

Ardan noted it all afar off where he hid himself with the younger singers. The song that came to his mind was of a white bird weighted with golden chains. But in the old Irish tales of chained doves or swans there were ever two birds chained together with golden links — and she was alone. In his heart he was glad it was so. He could not think of her in another way. She was still to him the lone white bird, though a jeweled queen.

But it was not of that he dared sing when the tiny harp was put in his hand, for he was to the others only a chance bearer of a letter, and traveling in no great honor. And she was wife to Prince of Breffni and sat on a throne.

And the thing he sang was the farewell song he had

made for her in a far dawn when she had worn a silver-gray veil instead of a queen's crown. And he had named her silver cloud — Argatonel.

The sun has set at morning tide,
Argatonel!
The wall between is deep and wide,
Argatonel!
Above it stars of heaven may rise
In witchery,
But none so wondrous as your eyes
Of mystery.
Argatonel — white wings to you!
Argatonel — white road to you!
O Silver Cloud that wraps the world,
My song to you!

He marked the very heart-beat in which she knew the song and the singer, though she did not turn head or glance to where he was, and her attention was given entirely to converse with the chief of Mac Roigh and his lady wife who was an Irish princess out of Alba, where Irish tribes had gone in a far-off time.

But when the song was ended, Dervail turned as if for mere courtesy, and spoke.

"It is a fair, mellow voice, and a new song for us," she said. "Bid the singer come for speech."

The steward of the castle brought forward Ardan, and told his name and errand, and showed the letter and spoke.

"I bade him wait the return of our Lord of Breffni, and while he waits we seek to give him fair courtesies, and the usage of a chief's son."

"You serve your lord well," said the queen. "He shall be of our household. Whence come you, strange singer?"

"Late from Rome and other far lands," said Ardan, his eyes on the golden hem of her robe, and not lifted to her

face, for the eyes of the others were looking, and had nought else to do but look.

"Do pilgrims to Rome come back with songs of gallantry to bright eyes?" she asked, and smiled, and the younger maids pressed close to listen.

"A pilgrim sometimes carries the songs, and the memory of eyes, on all the wide circle from the white strand of Erinn to the harbor of return," said Ardan, and she laughed at that, and bade him to a seat near, and told him he should sing for her again, and he might teach one of the maidens the song of "Argatonel," for the air was a sweet air, and a plaintive.

Then, having shown him this much of courtesy, her mind in appearance strayed from him to matters of more import, but the youths and maids circled him, and had their pleasure in questions of far lands, and Roderick, son of Turlough, the King of Erinn, was there, and spoke of Rome and the scriptures of the Irish sent eastward to carry both religion and book craft to the Germanic peoples, and their neighbors, the Gauls.

"For that purpose was Erinn the savior of learning for all Europe," said the Mac Roigh. "In the wars of the Huns and the Northmen the great eastern land was swept bare of scholars, and Greek was lost to the Gallic tribes until our books and our men carried it back again."

"Strange to hear—that is," mused Roderick. "As strange as to think that the Gaelic and the Latin we speak and read could be lost to our children in another day."

"It may be that the waters on every side of Erinn will be the wall to keep that loss far from us forever," said Mac Roigh, "but in the great foreign land there is neither wall nor waters of separation. The tribes overrun and melt into each other, or they fight and harvest the enemy as grain in a field. It is all and always change there;

thus were their settlements of religious men reaching out for the Irish scriptures made here in sanctuary. Gelasius the bishop was telling us of that at Clonfert."

"I had thought," ventured Roderick, "that between the Danes and raiders of Norway and their Saxon mates, Erinn had work in plenty to save even life, without the strife to save learning enough to civilize her invaders. It's a good gift they got from us when our saints taught them religion. And it was an evil payment they made to us with their ships full of raiders."

"Our well-beloved Dall Clairineach told me Erinn was set apart like a jewel in a lost casket," said Ardan. "The old south sea-way to us was lost to the traders of Europe through the time of the great wars; our land was out of the path of battle and was forgot. When they found us again, it was in a different way—an island beyond an island in the sea! While they had fought and made destruction of all things, our men of many crafts and many books had worked to garner and build. All the learning was here to start anew the broken, foreign tribes."

"More than some godly souls made welcome!" said Roderick. "I ever had wonder on me to know what penance was given Forgal the saint when the Pope at Rome reproved his heresy in writing that the world was round instead of flat as we all are knowing it."

"Forgal had lived on the coast here at home," said Cineath the cleric, "and took note that the masts of a vessel at sea are seen before the body of the vessel is seen. Yes, he was given strong reproof for saying it, but his writing was not changed because of that—he left it as the words were written. In all else it is known he was a true scholar, and a holy man—the blessing of God on his soul, and on us!"

The talk went on thus, and the queen and her ladies

listened. Ardan could feel her eyes on him, though never once did he meet her gaze with directness. He did not obtrude his speech, except as one of the men of rank asked of his journey afar, but he knew that he did not seem out of place near her throne, and had a pride in that.

"You speak of the wise and holy abbot of Ardbreccan," said Mac Roigh as the time for rest came, and the prayer of the cleric was ended. "Was he well known by you?"

"He was as my father while he lived, and left me to his close friend when he died," said Ardan. "His fancy was to make me as a scribe and genealogist—but why should I, a son of no family, turn genealogist?"

"No family?" said Mac Roigh, and looked at him. "If you were not of blood and race, think you so renowned a man would have found in you the stuff for his science? And you wear the colors of a noble."

"Youth thinks not so much of these matters, and I was but a youth when I turned from that work," said Ardan. "Instead of a devout priest with quill and ink pot I am a priest's message bearer to royal houses."

"We will see you again tomorrow," said the queen graciously. "If you ride, you could attend on the ladies who fancy sport with the falcons on the moor."

"I ride," said Ardan.

THREE days they were speaking like that before princes and chiefs, and three nights he was led by Kauth, her woman, to Kauth's own curtained room of sleeping, and there Dervail came to him. Kauth was their guard, and their nights were of whispers. He heard

there her dreams of strange greatness, and knew that Breffni's crown was as a golden rung in a ladder she meant to climb.

"And you, Ardan, will climb with me, for it is true what the chief of Mac Roigh has said: no youth below the noble rank of *aire-desa* wears the colors, and is taught music and chess, shooting and the riding of horses — swift riding beautiful! You are fitting in all ways, and have the trust of Diarmod, and that is a thing lucky. When the day comes I will have you near the throne and my eyes are made glad that you have visage and speech of a prince. It will be well for you."

"Your talk is in circles," he said. "You are queen — yet you talk of the day when you win the throne! I come through all the wilderness for the reason that you were a soul in prison — and it is a different thing I find. You have freedom for the first time, and are using it on men."

"I do the things of my girl dreams," she said. "I never was told how women had power and here I am learning. When I go to Diarmod —"

"No," he said, "it is not good to dream that. There is Prince of Breffni and Mor na Tuathal between you two! Her people are of greatness in power, and even a strong king might not stand out against them. She is his wife, and her brothers are his watchers."

Dervail lifted a feather, and tossed it upward.

"She, and her brother abbots, and sainted priests will weigh not so much as that against my wish, when I wish it," she said. "I am out of the convent walls forever and am learning the power of women — and the strength of it is sweet."

"And what answer to Diarmod who would save you again for sanctuary if your prayer was for that? for without your word he may not take this road."

"The time will come when I send him signal. It will be — it will be a white pearl of royal size. There are creels of jewels here! I will be sending one to him more beautiful than the one given by Gillebart of Limerick to Anselm the archbishop oversea — and that one was called a royal gift to the prince of the English church. Yes, it will be a pearl I will send when I send the call for him. It is a fine thing for me that I am able to bind my friends with a queen's gifts."

"It — is not a queen to whom he was sending me, Dervail. It was a veiled maid of the cloisters, and she calling for champion."

She laughed low, and looked at him in pride.

"Every man in this keep would be champion of mine if I called — and if I gave him my smiles," she said, "but not one is strong to control all the others. I have given much thought to that matter and secret knowings have been spoken to me by a man of the Old Wisdom! Diarmod is, of all Erinn, the one of strength; and he will be stronger in days to come, for his gathering of spears will be a great gathering. The spears he gathers will make a new ruling for all Erinn. And I was knowing that thing before the day I laid sight on Tiernan the ravager."

"You are talking of dark, hidden things, Dervail, and they are forbidden."

"They are true things, and the stars tell them! A secret man, who has the name of Duffagan, told me that thing in Clonard. He was a scholar but no monk, and Kauth gives him fellowship. When O'Ruarc would in willingness bring any retainer of mine, I brought him as husband to Kauth, and that was saving his life. He has a fever on him for old books, and his was the task to carry north the annals most rare. He has the trust of O'Ruarc who thinks him a book fool; but he knows the stars and the tides,

does Duffagan Mac Knea, and he knows the tides of men's lives as he does the tides of the sea! When he tells me it is time to send call to Diarmod of the Spears, it will be gladness for me to be sending it. And until that day comes I am waiting and learning and dreaming my dreams."

"Mac Knea," said Ardan, "that means 'Son of the Night'—it is a curious name to put on a man."

"Yet it is fitting," said Dervail, "else he would not be having it. Words have power, and the wrong word he would not have on him. He has a wisdom not to talk of to every bird crossing over, and none of these people are knowing it. They laugh at him, and call him the little dark spider sitting ever alone in a corner with watching eyes; but a spider spins webs beyond craft of mortal."

"It may be evil craft you praise in him! How then if you find it so?"

"It is true craft," she insisted. "Already it has proven itself on me. Of Tiernan's hosting I was warned by him. I was ready on that day, and it was no weeping novice he found in me, but a king's ward, with the rights of a noble. He was my key to the world, and I used him. I came not out of the walls a captive: it was the wife of the Prince of Breffni who rode beside him."

"A mystery are you to me, Dervail," said Ardan, "and not the caged bird I crossed the kingdoms to find."

"The caged bird!" she said. "Ardan, have you memory of the snow bird you made of me in the cloisters?"

"I have the memory—and the guilt," he said. "When I listen to you I think I was 'fey' that night I worked on it. I had cold and hunger and my soul afire. Had I made likeness of the Holy Ones with such perfectness, the monks would have made a saint of me; instead of which they banished us both far as was in their power. And—

they did not break down its white wings of ice quick enough to save it from the eyes of Diarmod!"

She gave a little cry at that, but it was a sound of joyous triumph.

"Again has Mac Knea proven true," she said. "He told me it was by some work of another that Diarmod's heart turned to thought of me. That I did not believe, and so I have said; but it was true! You, Ardan, made one image of me poised for flight — you must make for me another — when I have reached the end of the flight and picked my throne."

He thought she made a jest of him, but her beauty was so great that he was content to look in silence, as he thought that no queen ever told of in song or annal had such beauty as hers. Not fair Dierdre of the sorrows, or the wondrous Brighde who was goddess of beauty and art, or that Grania whose beauty and courage were as one when her beauty won a crown, and her courage dared toss it aside as a ball in her great game — and her game was Love.

He sat thinking these things, and knowing that all the beauty of all of them could not equal the beauty of Dervail. It was seemly enough that her fame might indeed grow great as she hoped, and her name be widely known among the rulers of Erinn.

So deep was his dreaming of it that he kept no count of his silence, or her curious looks.

"Of what are your thoughts when you stare past me as if there was naught between yourself and the skins on the wall?" she asked, and he roused and looked at her.

"I am thinking there was never your equal for beauty in all the wide world, Dervail," he said simply, "neither them that are living, nor them who are gone the Way."

"You are the same Ardan," and her smile was strange.

"You think I fail to make note of beauty because I do not play the sighing champion for your favor," he said, "but you read me wrong. As ward of Murtagh of Meath, and foster child of Donough of Orielle it is a pretty puzzle to me why each king was not striving to make best marriage for you with ally of his own. They shut you in high walls for life without choice of yours — and would have forgot you were living if —"

"If the Son of the Night had not made the key to come to my cell!"

"What would you say?"

"Three new moons was his work to help it to come that way," she whispered. "He made secret prayers for that thing — to the four ways he was sending that call for the man — and Tiernan was the man to hear it, and to come there, and Tiernan was the key!"

"More like it was that Tiernan sent your master of druid lore to spy out the wealth of Clonard! You were part of that wealth, Dervail."

"I have wonder if that be true," she mused, and her eyes were looking sideways in thought, but the red-rose lips curved over the white little teeth of her, and the blue eyes had laughing pride.

"Even if it be so, the rule of Tiernan is over with that man, and mine is the rule," she said. "He pins his life to my service. Tiernan is now but a man on our chessboard. And you are wrong in one thing: Tiernan knows nothing of Duffagan's hidden wisdom; no, Tiernan has dread of such learning, for he was born at Whitsuntide, and it was foretold that by a man and a woman of druid craft would his downfall be if he followed their steps. That is why, after every hosting, or every great killing he makes faithful pilgrimage to the shrine of Phadraig. Great and rich gifts he will be leaving there to prove he is christian

surely. No — Ardan, Tiernan of Breffni has fear, and has horror of all 'Old Wisdom,' and the life of Mac Knea would go out like a rushlight in the wind if Tiernan knew."

"And you! Is there no fear on you?"

"At first there was fear — and great fear — but not now. The strength of the stars is with us, and that lifts and bears me above the fear. The 'Old Wisdom' has made me Queen of Breffni and that, Ardan, is my first move in the game, and it is a great game."

"If someone should be telling Tiernan O'Ruarc?"

"I would kill that one, Ardan, and you alone have my secret."

"Suppose I tell it to Diarmod?"

She looked at him, and thought a bit and laughed in silence.

"That would be favor to me," she decided. "He has no love for me — yet; though he has much thought of me. That telling would give him more thought, for I will spend one secret night on Tara with the man whose name will go down the centuries with mine! Take that saying to Diarmod for me, Ardan; it will tell him that no pale-blooded nun has come north to rule in Breffni. Let him give dreams to a night in Tara!"

"Tara has been desolate these many generations."

"Yet his fathers did rule there, Ardan, and it may be my own did! It is the place for Ard-Ri of Erinn, and it may be a great rule will yet be built on its ruins."

"It is a dream, Dervail."

"Duffagan is saying all great things of life have been grown from dreams, and that the moon and the stars govern our dreams."

"I would see this priest of the forbidden ere I journey south, and tomorrow is the latest I may linger. It is no

wish of mine to see Tiernan of Breffni, whose plunder is sacred things of altars."

"Yet are you loyal to Diarmod."

"What then? Diarmod gives endless wealth to holy houses. His own gold has built monasteries and churches for the glory of saints."

"Ardan," said Dervail, gently smiling, "all this is truth, yet there are other truths of him; when a lord of the south refused his daughter to Diarmod in the days of Diarmod's youth, he gathered spears and took her with the veil and the vows of a nun on her! In amorous fellowship she was held in his castle and wedded there to a lord of his choosing. That is the custom of a king who has power, Ardan! He takes what he wants! I hear much of the power of Diarmod of Leinster. He has their hate, but their tales are tales of praise to me, for they tell of his strength."

"Their hate may build untruths against him. When was this ravaging?"

"In Kildare, and her name was Dhira. Her house was the house of Cahsadhe, and one hundred and seventy lives were sent back to God in her capture. She lived a hidden woman after that time, but the story could not be hidden. That was before your birth, or mine, Ardan."

"Dall Clairineach surely had knowing of that if it was a true thing, Dervail, yet yours is the first word of it I am hearing."

"It is not for nothing Diarmod founds monasteries and religious houses! You have been bred in them, Ardan, and it is a place for holding secret things."

Kauth slipped through the arras to tell them the cocks were crowing and the old day was gone. She looked strangely at Ardan, and to Dervail, when alone, she said the youth had much of beauty, too much for such distance of converse as was his custom.

"True enough," said Dervail, unbraiding the pearls in her hair. "But there are other men for other uses, and this one has such honestness he would be useless to me except in his own spirit. Because I tell him much, he thinks I tell him all; and in his prayers my name will not be forgotten."

RAUTH, who had been lay sister of Clonard, was given higher place than the place of a serving-woman in the castle of O'Ruarc, and her dress held three colors. She rode abroad with Dervail when the days were fine, and ever stood between when man or woman made approach to the hall of the queen.

Thus she rode obedient with the glad riders of the springtime in the forest, and with adroitness found way to lose herself with the queen and Ardan, and all three rode in the edge of the great wood, and looked out on the moor where women with their young were gathering gorse bloom and marsh marigold to keep luck in the house when hung over the door on May Eve. Others were plucking primrose for the doorstep, and youths were seen bearing holly and rowan and a young tree of the yew for the circle dance of the many stars around the Still Star of the north.

"It would seem a strange nightfall to be out in the wilderness," said Ardan. "All christians are together elsewhere on the eve of Beltain."

"Duffagan Mac Knea gives me word that the prayers are the same, and only the difference is that saints' worship is given instead of druid. The dance does not change, and the harp music does not change, and the faith does

not change. I have spoken at every chance with these people concerning all things, and not yet has Duffagan told me anything not of easy proof."

"But the castle cleric, Cineath, has he no reproof?"

"He knows Duffagan only as student and scribe, who has gone into the foreign world to the shores of the Nile, and tells no cleric of the deeper things learned there."

They had reached a hill of three circles, and Kauth, who rode apart, came close and slipt from her horse.

"No animal must press foot up above," she said. "So said Duffagan to me. Since the end of yesterday has he been here, and fasting. It is new moon, and Beltain."

Dervail sat on her white horse and looked up at the steep sides of the hill, and looked beside her at a huge square stone, pierced, and once rudely carven, but now covered with lichen gray and green and russet. It was high as her own head and she on the back of the horse. Other stones of the same bigness were seen as if standing guard around the circle of a great earth temple.

"There were great men in the world when that thing was done," she said. "It was not two or three people who were coming here then to take note of the sky and the clouds over the new moon."

Ardan said no word. He saw Kauth take from under her cloak a white pigeon wound about with white and saffron bands. She placed it in the hands of Dervail and pointed upward.

"Not empty-handed must you go there," she said. "Pluck a rowan or a holly branch for the hand of your friend. I have my happiness in lack of knowledge, and will be your guard of the horse below."

A dim path went up through the wood clothing the steep, and at the first terrace they saw other tall stones like sentinels circling the hill. Ardan felt as if he had passed

some strange dread portal into an ancient life; far above he saw that which he had heard of in Gaul but never dreamed to see in Erinn.

It was a temple in the open with the sky for roof. Great squared pillars arose in a circle, and to the east a sanctuary was made by a huge slab overhead and two uprights on either side. An altar was there on a raised floor of stone, and Duffagan the silent, in white robe and saffron bands, stood there watching the sinking sun, and striking flint on flint craftily where the silken strands of the wild flax made tinder.

A tiny spiral of smoke curled and drifted along the stone slab above him, and the two at the edge of the circle stood still and spoke no word.

A curious hoop of hazel wands was beside the altar, and two balls suspended at either side — one of yellow, one white; twigs of rowan were there, and twigs of yew.

The priest lifted the hoop and whirled it sunwise through the smoke, and Ardan knew it was symbol of sun and moon circling thus through the smoke of the earth altar.

As the last fire of the sun went beyond the great sea of mystery, the blaze of the temple leaped up — it was as if stolen out of the western sky!

Dervail thrust spray of holly into the hand of Ardan, and went forward with her offering.

Ardan could hear the low murmur of a prayer or incantation as water from a shallow cup in the stone was sprinkled in a circle about the slender blaze.

Sun and Sky,
Moon and Earth,
Fire and Water,
Living Green!

As the priest lifted his eyes, Dervail went forward with her strange offering. Without fear she walked, yet with

a look of question. And Ardan knew it was for the first time.

"As Life I make my offer," said Dervail.

"As Life I give it again to the elements by which life endures."

The voice of the man had a sweet singing note in it by which Ardan was won in surprise. He had expected roughness or harshness in an un-christian priest, yet Duffagan, who was also "Son of the Night," was gentle beyond belief.

So amazed was he at this that he scarce noted the firm, quick stroke of the flint knife until the wings fluttered once, and then were held close and steady while the blood trickled from the slit throat to the altar where the fire was.

Dervail stood, serene, yet pale of face, for it was a place of curious imaginings. Ardan saw her cast quick look over her shoulder, and knew that, like him, she felt the movement, or the very breathing of a multitude circling that high place of ancient mysteries. Once he thought he heard the sound of shrill singing far off, to the tramp of thousands of feet, but in another moment he knew it was a distant shepherd's pipe, and the wind hurtling through the forest below.

Wind caught the flame and blew it against the hazel hoop of the symbols. Dervail led Ardan forward.

"Once I was to come to this place where you read the stars, Duffagan," she said. "I am here to keep faith, and I bring my one friend who makes offer beside me."

Ardan's hand held out the branch of holly, and Duffagan stripped the leaves, and let them fall one by one on the blaze. His watching of each new flame was curious. He did not speak until there were left only red embers of the twigs.

"Good it is that your soul is strong in faith, O Queen,"

spoke the strange, gentle, even voice. "The trial times of life will call for much strength of yours, and it is well to prove faiths. I have fasted and prayed here, and have read the sky at this new time of the moon, but this is not a moon in which change will come to you. It is a moon for patience. Your friend who has come as a new star in your sky is safest if his going is soon. There are watchful eyes in the head of the cleric of Breffni. Take you leave as if careless of time, but ride for life when you have turned a hill!"

"Cineath the cleric?" mused Dervail. "He is a ferret for Tiernan. I will provide for you extra horse on the way, Ardan."

Ardan gave curious glances to the man whose words she heeded, and made promise to act on. Dark he was, as his name denoted — dark, and small, and gentle — and his dark eyes had a strange, withdrawn look as if looking at the two mortals, yet listening to unseen things!

"The Great Bear of the stars points again to the east at fall of night," he said. "It is the mid-sign between heat and cold, and is the time for searching. The old learning has been lost for the reason that no royal protector dare stand against the craft of the saints and their followers. But many, Dervail, will have your name in their speech, and you will cause much wonder in the minds of many. That is a thing I read in all castings for you, and it may come to pass that you will be the royal one who dares openly sanction that ancient hidden wisdom to which each simple heart makes secret prayer."

"With aid from you, and guided by the powers unseen, I have brought here in secret my vow offering," said Dervail. "That is my pledge — a fair white pledge — not to go backward on the road we are walking. In one year — two years — a thousand men and women will face sunwise

aoout the circle where we alone stand now. You will be the honored priest of divinings, the thousands will give you their strength when their fear is lifted — and lifted it will be if you show me the time and the road for Tara."

"That will come — and strife will come — and terrors. Great hostings will come, and kings will fall; but you will live through all, and your name — your name — it is a name whispered secretly now, but in days to come there will be shouting of that name — Dervail — Dervail — Dervail!"

His speech was half whispered, and he said her name as if repeating echoes of it afar off. A faint smile was on his lips and his face serene.

For the first time Ardan spoke.

"For what reason is Tara the key to any greatness when Tara itself was cursed by Ruadan the saint, and is deserted ground, and crumbling walls in our day?"

Duffagan did not at once make reply. It was as if he had drawn out of hearing. Then he came back and spoke.

"Tara even in desolation is a word of power. Images of greatness belong in that place — and some mortals see them! Tara is the mid-court of dominion, and the Ard-Ri should face the sunrise from that center. Tara is a symbol, as are these things before me symbols of the heavens and the earthly life. By symbols spirit is caught in the silence and held, breathless, for the union with knowledge. Tara holds a message for the woman or man who would rule Erinn — and the message cannot be carried to another. Each finds there that which his own soul can circle. Dervail has made record that it is the rule desired by her. My task is to study stars, and phases of the moon, and find the safe time for such journey."

"Will he, my friend, be beside me?" asked Dervail, and Duffagan peered at her in the falling twilight.

"He will not be there. His road touches yours strangely, and a veil between! Is he of your kindred?

"I have no kindred," said Ardan.

"I think that is not true," said Duffagan, "for I see you bear shadows or burdens of kindred."

"Where do you see these things?"

"I read it in the leaves of your holly when the flame curled them into shapes before burning; if not kindred to Dervail, it is to some mortal close to Dervail."

"We are going, Duffagan," she said. "The dark will be coming, and the spies of Tiernan on the road. I come to the sunset of Beltain because of your prayers here, and in other days many will follow me."

"They will," he said. "I hear the voices of many calling your name."

He held his hands out over her head in blessing, and made gesture of the way they should circle the altar and the path of descent. He did not look at them again, and as they passed without the great circle they looked back. He was holding at arms' length the hoop of the hazel, and looking through it at the faint silver line of the new moon against the dark purple of the western sky.

Dervail drew near to Ardan, and laid her hand on his as if to know a mortal beside her, for red light from the sun long gone reflected itself on a cloud in midheaven and fell on Duffagan. It turned his robe and the stones about him into soft light of flame — and left a strange image.

"It is as if a furnace of fire had opened at his feet, lighting him only, and leaving all the other pillars in cold gray," said Ardan, as he watched the light fade again.

"Strange signs follow Duffagan, or, does his thought compel them? He has fasted since set of last night's sun, and will have no feast until tomorrow. All this he does for the craft he follows."

"His belief is strong as though his birth had been in Phadraig's day, and not in this," said Ardan. "It is a strange end to my last day with you, Dervail."

She pressed his arm and walked beside him into the shadows of the wood.

"Make me a song of this place, Ardan. A song of the old, old days when sharp edges were yet on these great stones, and this hill was saffron and white with the robes of Ancient Faith people."

"That is far to go for a song, Dervail. I have made you songs most of my years, but this is not the place I would seek for songs of you, lest they be sad songs."

The wife of Tiernan peered at him from under her golden mane.

"Is it fear on you, Ardan?"

"I think it is not fear, but this mystic hill is not a place to seek lightly on the eve of Beltain."

"What could come to us?" she asked and clung to his arm. "Ardan — many times you have come close in my thoughts of old in my dreams. But the words of Duffagan of the veil between — what meant he by that? Look, Ardan, what other man would not turn warm when my warm hand touched him? Yet you are cold; what is it, Ardan? Did some veil indeed fall between at that altar? See, my hand did not touch you as we went up; yet were we more close than now, Ardan."

"Duffagan has given you dreams and fears, and it is best not to speak of them now in this place," he said.

"What could come to us?" she repeated.

"What could not? Is that altar jewel you wear so holy that it is strong enough to guard you in all places?"

She drew away and stared at him, and drew her robe more closely over her breast.

"Have you 'the sight,' Ardan? Times are when I think

it. You know that great jewel of white diamond and red ruby?"

"I heard of it at Armagh. It was the wondrous star of Clonard, and strange wealth to wear riding the forest."

She laughed at that, and shook forward the gold of her hair over her breast. They were again near to Kauth, who stood with the horses.

"Tiernan forbade that the altar jewels see the light of day in his absence," she confessed. "But what use has a pilgrim of penitence with gems of richness?"

He did not answer, but helped her on the horse. The question of the jewel had changed the momentary love-light in her eyes, or the claim of warmth for warmth. He knew she had been touched by fear in the druid circle, and it had driven her to his arms if he would have her there.

Kauth looked at them as they came down, but had no question. Though drawn to Duffagan as a mate for his comfort, she had no wish to know the secret things of his dark delvings.

They rode hard and fast until in sight of the castle, and then Ardan spoke.

"I will carry your message south, Dervail, and I will go tonight instead of on the morrow. I have seen your hopes and your dark road to them."

"And your thoughts are baleful and apart from me!"

"No. Call on me for that which I dare to serve you. But you have taken yourself out of the world we know together. It may be I cannot follow. Your strange Duffagan says there is a veil between our roads of life — and neither of us can prove that this day. But take deep thought to what you do, Dervail. Duffagan spoke of symbols, and I saw one when you offered the white-feathered thing there for the altar knife."

"Ardan, what did you see?" and he knew she was

thinking of that strange *crowded* feeling within the circle. The unlaid ghosts of the centuries swept to the altar at the call of blood.

"I saw the white bird of a boy's dream of beauty in a cloister. I saw the caged bird I rode north to seek sight of, and to lead spears of aid to — and I saw a queen who offered that bird as token for ambitions of earth power. It was only a symbol, Dervail, but you placed all in one under the knife there! Your white bird was a symbol instead of the children other women, in other ages, have borne up to that druid rath for sacrifice."

"Ardan!" and her white hands were flung out toward him. "That will be the veil between, and I will be a lone woman — terribly lone."

"You will be queen of beauty and power, Dervail. But put your all of white dreams and of heart-love on that altar, and you will then indeed be alone in life and in death!"

She drooped there, her hair a veil about her in the gloaming, and her hands clasped over her knee.

Two kerns ran out the castle gate and stood with lights at either side to light her entrance. She straightened and tossed back her hair, and rode forward in pride.

"Yet the dream of Tara is a great dream for a life," she said.

THE harvest of the year was not yet garnered when the pearl of Dervail went south to Diarmod of Leinster by the hand of Duffagan.

It found him flushed with the victory of Moanmore against Turlough O'Brian, and strong with the thought

that O'Conor of Connaught owed him and owed Meath too much of grace to lift sword or spear if the sacking of Clonard Abbey by O'Ruarc was avenged at last by the lords of Leinster.

In every secret way Diarmod and Malachi, Prince of Meath, had gathered strength and made bonds in friendship for that hosting when the time came, and the messenger of Dervail told the day O'Ruarc was going north on a hosting of his own against a rebellious sub-chief who had taken sides with O'Lochlainn of Ulster in his claims to the rule of Ard-Ri of Erinn as against Turlough O'Conor, whose word was the most weighty in all but the northlands.

The days of going and the days of return had been reckoned with care by Duffagan, and there were plenty for the task.

As to a joyous fair rode the men of the spears of Diarmod, and he, kingly in pride, in the midst of them. Years sat light on him, for the message of Dervail had brought back his youth. It had come at a time when the music of life was dulled by the discords of rule, and the watchful eyes of Conor, the heir-apparent. But the dream of the forbidden maid brought deep longings, and her secret call to him brought again the fairy songs of youth to his soul.

Fierce was the assault on Breffni, and lightning quick the conquest of the castle where Kauth had seen to it that every lock was loosed.

No woman was touched but the wife of O'Ruarc, who was bidden forth with her chosen woman, as hostage to Diarmod of Leinster.

In garb royal, clad in the cloak of seven colors, walked Dervail out from under the roof of the prince who had been her Key!

The men of Leinster and Meath gave long looks to her as she walked between the rows of them to the champing racer straining on his bit, and their eyes turned to each other, dazzled by the brilliant beauty of her. No such hostage had ever been given from prince to king in Erinn.

It was the hand of Diarmod touched her foot in the mounting, and they two were speechless as their hands met. It was the wild dream coming true, and the stars read by Duffagan had all her faith in that moment!

Kauth mounted her horse, and among her goods fastened to the saddle was the gift-cup given by hand of Diarmod in the castle of Donough. The sight of it helped Dervail to her voice.

"It has not been drunk from under that roof," she said, "but now we will be drinking from it again — and at the well of Nemnach in Tara we will drink."

"Your word is the word — and will be," said Diarmod the king.

MURTAGH, King of Meath, knew nought of the hosting until the spears of Leinster were north of Ath-Luain, and there was none for comfort but Donough of Orielle — and him only with the hope that Dervail would seek shelter from all men in the abbey of Mellifont.

But Malachi, Prince of Meath, rode back the richer for the plundering of Breffni, and spoke his content at the sisterhood claimed for Dervail.

"No queen so queenly in Erinn," he made boast, "and it is a foolish thing to hide, as you have hid — her daugh-

terhood ! Take pride that she is of our line, even though a shadow is on her dam — whom no one is knowing! She will yet be queen for Diarmod — and our house remembered because of her name."

"That has been a long, dark, fear of mine !" said Murtagh the king.

But Malachi had no knowledge of the secret held by the older man, and thought it a foolish saying.

"Meath has been made strong for us by this act," he boasted. "The troubles of yours with the clerics will be at an end, for Diarmod has made pledges for Meath. From Clonard to the Shannon you are to be protected by hostage; from Clonard eastward to the sea I am to divide the rule. This makes stronger the border ; thus much of gain already for your tie — whatever it be — with the wife of Breffni."

Murtagh frowned at the words and walked apart, deep in thought ere he spoke.

"I wish death in peace," he said, "and I can have that best by forgetting the tie. Pray God she makes choice of a cloister!"

But she made choice of a different thing; from the rath of Malachi, whom she now called "brother," she went for some secret thing to the ancient rath of the Kings at Tara on Midsummer's Eve. There went Diarmod to keep tryst with her, and drink from the well of Nemnach.

Until the morning star shone over the plain to the east they were alone on the height where his forefathers had been high kings through the centuries, and the look on his face was a look of entrancement when he came down from that place, and Dervail beside him.

"She is my mate, and no woman before has been that to me," he said to Malachi. "The clerics must find a way for it, for she is queen to me."

Yet, because of fear for her at the hands of Conor, the son of Mor, who was moving toward death, he took her not among his own children at Ferns, but in gorgeousness and much comfort placed her in the castle of O'Faelain in Kildare with a loyal guard, and the hostages of a princess claimed for her safety from Rhudri, lord of the castle.

Thus came the daughter of Dyveke south into the region where the Danes had their holdings under Leinster, and where her mother had cursed the land, and all kings and all clans of Erinn!

GREAT wealth had been taken out of Breffni by Leinster — not only her own dower wealth, but rich plunderings of Clonard, and the droves of cattle taken were the wonder of the country in crossing.

Like fire in the forest after falling of the leaves ran the story of that hosting, and of the vengeance on Breffni for the sacking of Clonard. Murtagh of Meath, and Donough of Orielle, and Duighal the prior went into prayer and deep converse over it. All things within human power had been done by them for the hiding of Dervail — yet had she ridden free and set their world afire!

But prayers of piety could do naught to stem the flood of rage unloosed by her ambitions and the pillaging of Breffni. Turlough O'Conor, the high king, took sides with O'Ruarc. Erinn was divided in the struggle. The enemies made by Diarmod in his proud domination turned their spears against him, and annihilation threatened on every side. Turlough, the High King, sent a priest to deliver the doom of Leinster unless Dervail and her dower

were returned to O'Ruarc of Breffni. And troops of Breffni followed the messenger.

Diarmod raged like a wounded bull.

"My men will die for her, though they may not save her," he said. "I cannot be the one to make choice; that is hers to make. But the army of Turlough and Breffni have crossed the Shannon."

RHUDRI of O'Faelain came riding a foaming steed, and stumbled, dazed and spent, before Diarmod.

"My plea is to serve you in some other way," he begged. "More than my troops are needed in the guarding of Queen Dervail for you. Her name has carried on the wind to strange places, even to the cells of monks in the wilderness. One of them, old and blind, and housed for charity in my hall, made his way in secret to her chair, an evil knife under his monk's robe, and —"

"Harm to Dervail?" thundered Diarmod, and the speaker quailed—"the lives of your household will answer!"

"No harm has come to her beyond the baleful deed done under her eyes. Her dark friend, Duffagan, gave his blood instead of hers, and wounded the monkish murderer to the death. But the dying monk said some things of horror for her ears, and all who lavished courtesies on that fair lady now flee from her! It is a mystery—like rats seeking holes, they scatter as I turn my back. To save her there in life and dignity is beyond the power of man without guards—without servants."

"What is their fear?"

"They will not voice it. May happen it is the death of the monk, or his words not heard by me. It may be the death of Duffagan of whom they had great awe. At her feet it is he died, and her own robe red with the blood of them both, yet there was no shrinking of her and no scream."

"She is a fitting queen, and royal her daring," muttered Leinster, "and it is a baleful task to speak any going backward on the road for her! There is none to bear that word but one friend, and he would be loth, though constant. You, Donall, send to Glendalough for Ardan, the fosterling of Donough."

The lord of O'Faelain put out his hand to stay the son of Diarmod.

"That message has gone on swift feet," he said. "It was the first request of Queen Dervail."

"Gone? And for what purpose?"

Donall the Illegitimate looked at him and gave quiet but scornful laughter.

"Ardan has a good shape and good looks," he said.

The great hand of Diarmod smote him on the mouth, and the dirk of Diarmod was out.

Conor, the heir-apparent, caught his arm and was flung aside, and Rhudri of O'Faelain stepped between.

"Take time with you in counsel, Diarmod, ere you slay a son for sake of a hostage you will be forced to return."

"Hostage?" said Diarmod, glowering.

"Is not that word the right word?" asked Rhudri. "It is the only one used for our queen guest in our keep. Connaught and Breffni are moving their troops to win her return, for the loss of Dervail is a greater blow to the pride of O'Ruarc than the loss of Longford and Leitrim. Is not hostage the wise word? Hostages are ever to be given back again, and in safety."

"She was hostage of Destiny to me, and not to be given back ever in life," said Diarmod.

Conor got Donall, with his bleeding mouth, out of the hall, and Diarmod sat steeped in gloom, turning over in his mind the attack on the life of Dervail. The word "hostage" as applied to her to cover her flight was a bitter word and — heavier than all — the thought of her going again out of his life, and she the glory of his dream of kingship over Erinn!

He arose, frowning, and with set jaws.

"No other must tell her since it must be told. I ride with you."

ARDAN was first at the castle of O'Faelain, and there was sickness on his soul for what he met in that place.

Herdsmen and kern, ploughman and smith, raged like a sea of storm about the walls of Faelain, and the name of Dervail was shouted in hate heard even at a distance. At times it would die away to a murmur, and then some wild voice would shrill aloud and the wave of sound would again roll upward — "Dervail the Shadow! Dervail of dark crafts! Dervail, the curse of Leinster!"

At sight of the scholar's robe of Ardan and the foam-wet steed, the mob made way, and held parley.

"Be our spokesman to the white slut who is harlot of two kingdoms," they said, "and we will let you pass safely. You are of the cells — they will let you speak. Tell the woman, and tell the governor, that none of

our men will fight to hold her for Diarmod. The High King of Erinn is against him, and much of Leinster is against him. A free road to her if she takes the Breffni way; and death on her if she makes a stand in Kildare! A holy man is done to death in there by her dark comrade, and the curse of all saints is against her forever for that! Dervail! Dervail, the malediction of men!"

They let him pass, and inside the gates white, stricken faces turned to him. The guard held spear and battle-axe against a rush of the crazed household. They pointed dumbly within when he spoke the name of Dervail. Only one man of the guard led the way, and he halted at the portal of her chamber.

A horrid weeping was heard within, quivering sobbing and choking. It was the woman Kauth, who had seen Duffagan dragged into the court below, and there hung in ghastly manner against the castle wall for the killing of Kieran Dall.

But the more ghastly thing was that Kieran had not yet died. He was coming out of a swoon of pain, and was prodded by Dervail, who sat beside him, dagger in hand, and steadily, in a dull, weary tone, making question.

"You lie, monk, but I would have you damn your soul with other lie at the last breath! What reason to ban my race more than the race of another? What reason to ban my mother? Speak ere I rack your wounds! What reason — blind monk?"

"The reason — the reason — Dyveke — is — proving — itself — in you! Your hand gave death — to him — to the father of your child, ere you went to your lover Thorold, fierce Dyveke!"

"Again you lie yourself to hell! The name Dyveke is a

name I never heard; I am a queen — Dervail the queen! Speak again the name of the race of the father of Dervail — speak!"

The woman Kauth never ceased the dreary, smothered keione of despairing, but neither Dervail nor the man with the black wounds gave heed. He had again sunk half out of life, and the breath of him was a hollow rattle.

"Speak, monk!" And again the prick of the knife was in his flesh. "You said it; say it again! The race of ancient kings? The branch sanctified in secret ways? It exalts me, that blood — and you shall speak! I am Dervail — I would know of that race. Speak! Speak again!"

There was a struggle, a twitching of the body, and a whisper.

"The race — dies out! Hark you! I hear wild waves on the shore; they are shouting curses — hark you! Dervail — Dervail! Dervail! The world rocks with that name of evil —

For eric in breaking
- - - -
A thousand years' yoke
On the bent neck - - of Erinn!
A - - thousand years' tribute of blood
- - - Inis Fair!"

Then there was only the rattle — and after that no whisper, and his head lolled sideways and was pricked by the dagger to no good. And Ardan made the sign of the cross at sight of the thing she did, and caught her hand in horror.

"Dervail! He has gone to God — and was a holy man!"

"He has gone to hell — and was a liar! Also he was a cheat! He died too soon, not telling all — only fragments of his hate for me. He brought death to Duffagan, and

he brought that pack of wolves howling below — and without Duffagan the road I crave is a dark way for me! Is Diarmod dead that these things are?"

It had been a long night and a morning she had sat there with her blind victim, and she viewed his dead face with disdain. And from weariness she was as in a daze. She looked at the blackened dagger, and again at Kieran Dall.

"Who was he that a place was made for him at the table of a noble?" she asked. "Who was he that he was filled with hate against me in the lands of Leinster?"

"He was a prince whose name was hidden under the robe, Dervail."

"Learn all for me and tell me! He made speech of things to madden my soul! I want Diarmod, and I want you to go to him! Hearken to the cries down there! It has been since sunrise — and ever more coming. Hearken to my name! Dervail! Dervail!"

"That is the thing prophesied by Duffagan, whom they call your 'Dark Comrade.' He told you in Breffni he heard the echoes of your name in countless voices on the winds."

"That is true," and she crouched there looking over her shoulder at him in a strange and fearful way; "but — but *Ardan* — this calling is in hate! They are not human beings down there — they are a hunting pack, howling for victim!"

"They are mortals, indeed, Dervail, but they are made mad by fear. An army of men are bearing shields against Leinster for the sake of you, and there is only one road of life and safety open for your feet."

"And that road, Ardan?"

"That road is north into Breffni."

"No! Not with Diarmod for my safety; not with his words of bondage still sounding in my ear!"

She rose to her feet as if the very words gave strength

to her, and her eyes looked proud even while her face went pale at the louder screams of fierceness down below.

"Dervail, that dream has died with your Dark Comrade; such is my thought. Diarmod is no longer safety for you. His own life he may not be saving. Between you two, all Leinster and Meath can be made desolate."

"What then? When he is triumphant, more than Leinster may be his. His vows to me were made in Tara, and who more fit than he to rule again in the ancient place of the great kings? No! The dreams did not end with Duffagan — they endure! Beside Diarmod I will ride to find them!"

Ardan turned to Kauth.

"Bring cover for the dead," he said, "and robe your queen for a dreary journey — and a speedy one."

Kauth covered the dead face of Kieran and then backed, sullen and defiant, against the wall.

"I have no queen in this place," she said. "Because of her, Duffagan is beheaded, and his head on a pike below. I saw what I saw done on that holy man who is dead, and I hear what you hear below in the shoutings. I think it is truth they tell down there in their cries — she is a malediction! Death to all is her one thought, so that she walks safe — that is her thought. In thrall to her was held Tiernan and Duffagan — they were a bridge for her feet. But I am no longer in thrall to her! I have seen unholy and unlucky things, and the words of dead Kieran are a curse against Dervail for always. If you, Lord Ardan, are brave to walk beside her now — you are the only man brave enough for it."

"Madness has fallen on her," said Dervail. "The death of her man took her little wit."

"Not all of it," said Kauth, who had a most evil look with her red eyes and swollen face, and her grin of malice.

"This is the one man who never took the gift of you at your offer — and he is the only one of all your lovers to brave your enemies to reach you this day of your days."

"Go!" screamed Dervail in white fury. "Scullion, whom I lifted and strove to make human! Join your mates below ere I have you thrown to them from the battlements!"

The woman slunk to the far end of the room of shadows, but cowered there, fearful of going down to the screaming mob. Dervail turned away and covered her ears with white, jeweled hands to shut out the clamor.

"Ardan," she whispered, "it is not all a lie she tells. They *have* scurried away from me like rats after a singeing! Rhudri of the Faelain has gone, and every woman of them is out of sight."

"I know the truth of that," he said, "for the men of the woodland are bearing brush and straw and great timbers. They will smoke you out unless you take the Breffni road with me, and the choice must be now."

"The choice?" she muttered, and walked wildly from window to window looking down on the horrid, waiting, upturned faces. "The choice? Ardan — soul of me always! Yours was the choice for me, and mine the rebellious heart! Yours was the true vision, for the vision of Duffagan has led me here to this trap! Yours was the hand I should have held to; yours was the white way for me, Ardan, the white way of the sun; and I am at last saying it!"

She flung herself on his shoulder, and her tears of self-pity touched his hand as he took her in gentleness toward the seat by the window.

But the seat was not reached, for the reason that Diarmod and O'Faelain came into the room at that min-

ute, and Diarmod, in a rush of rage, caught the shoulder of Dervail and flung her until she stumbled and fell across the dead body of Kieran.

"The shouts below are the shouts of the prophets," he said, "O royal harlot, who, in making choice, passes no man by!"

Ardan turned toward the king with lifted hand of protest, and Diarmod whipped out his dirk at that moment and thrust downward a mighty blow.

"You to the white way of your choice!" he said. "You to your white road — the two of you!"

Ardan fell under the weight of the blow, and blood stained his white garment, but a strange thing chanced at his falling, for the dagger was caught and wrested from the king's hand.

"A deep stroke, Diarmod, and an unlucky one. The youth is under misjudgment; my faith on that!" said O'Faelain, lifting Ardan and tearing open the white undergarment.

He crossed himself at what he saw there — and it was strange enough.

The slender blade of the king did not go deep for the reason that the point was bedded in a golden ring, and the ring on a golden flat chain fastened around the neck of Ardan.

O'Faelain undid the chain and handed it to Diarmod with the dagger pendant.

"God and Mary have no wish that you do murder or vengeance for this woman — and the sign of it is here," he said.

Ardan struggled to his feet — bloodstained and pale, his hand staunching the wound.

"You have robbed me of a thing precious," he said. "To a king and a lord of Erinn it can have little worth,

but as for me, if it is my time to die, I would wish to go into death with that token."

Diarmod looked from the gold ring on which there was graven a circled star and words in *ogham* and as his eyes met Ardan's eyes, he was more blanched than Ardan, and his voice was husky and strange.

"How is this precious to you — this thing more ancient than you can know?" he asked.

"It was on the breast of my mother at her death, and more than that I do not know. Dall Clairineach bade me use it as a token to any king of Leith Mogh if danger threatened me. For myself I would not use it — but if it has virtue I will use it that Dervail the queen rides safe."

"She will ride free," said Diarmod in a dull, strange way. "Look, Rhudri — see my punishment."

O'Faelain looked, and crossed himself, and lifted the hand of Ardan to his lips.

"O perfect prince — and the first born," he said, "you are a grace, and no punishment."

Dervail leaned forward, breathless at the words and at the look of Diarmod: she was forgotten by him and by O'Faelain. Their eyes saw only Ardan.

"You knew your mother?" asked Diarmod.

"I did not know her. Death took her. Dall Clairineach alone knew my blood, and he gave me no word. I am of his clan — so I am thinking."

"You are of the race of Conaire Mor, and your mother was Dhira of the Dark Hair whom they forced from me and hid away — a veiled woman! None told me there was a son, but her son could be only mine. You are the heir of my youth."

"Dhira!" said Dervail, her head thrust forward like a golden-headed serpent with its stroke of poison. "*That*, Ardan, was the nun he took from sanctuary — that was

the thing of which I told — and the thing you would not give your faith to — and you the living witness!"

Ardan looked at Diarmod in frowning question, and it was the eyes of Diarmod that wavered and fell.

"This is between these walls," said Ardan, and reached his hand for ring and chain. "Beyond the portal it is never to be spoke. If the token brings me fealty of a guard I will make use of it to lead this queen back in safety to her kingdom."

"See to it, Rhudri," said Diarmod. "All that he asks of Leinster is his. You had my love, boy, and today I am knowing that her eyes were ever looking out on me from your own."

Ardan made no reply. He was staunching the blood with linen torn in strips by O'Faelain.

"Diarmod," spoke Dervail, "has an old love weakened you to pleading for crumbs? Is it true that Turlough O'Conor and Tiernan of Breffni have cast the shadow of their spears against you and weakened your courage? You hear Ardan say he will guard me out of your kingdom, and you speak no word of protest? Did I then ride south beside you for only a holiday or a fair?"

"You came, a stolen queen as hostage," said Diarmod, "that is the tale to tell. The hours are past for words of that: you must go with the prince if you would keep life in you; the spears of two armies are already across our border to force your return to Breffni. I will have vengeance for the loss of you but that will be on another day — on this one there is only flight in all haste for you."

Thus he spoke, but his eyes were on Ardan and she saw it.

"You are not Diarmod the king this day," she said. "You are only a man in a trance who has the looks of Diarmod. This dead monk had devil's words of you, and

of me. He called me 'Dyveke the Dove' and said you were under *geis* to hold no white birds under snare. He had lies of old magic, and a curse for me in all of them. Are you knowing that baleful rune he mouthed? Know you that he met his death striving to do murder on me?"

"It is known, and it is a sorrow," said Diarmod, "and his is the first death of the many ere the end comes; thus has his life paid for his prophecy. Ulster will join me to war against Turlough and O'Ruarc; in another year Leinster will have allies and strength, and you will again ride south to rule."

"Your lips speak," said Dervail coldly. "You are not the king of the night on Tara."

Rhudri returned with a frightened maid and the cloak of Dervail.

"I pledge myself to send your goods on a morrow," he said; "it cannot be now. While the humor of the mob gives sanction to your going, is the time to go."

The smile of Dervail was bitter and dreary as she looked at the three men. She was no longer the first thought in any mind there. Ardan the prince, and the first-born of Diarmod, was suddenly most wonderful and pleasing in the eyes of the two men. Even the disdain of Ardan gave them pride in him.

"You to have royal rule when it means naught to you!" she said, looking at him, "and I to be robbed of it when it is breath of life to me!"

"I claim no rule — nor will I," said Ardan. "My mother died in sanctuary, and thus will I. Enough sons are in Leinster to divide the spoils. Cover well your head in the veil, for rain is falling. Give extra cloak to the maid, and I ask grace for her, and comfort if her courage lasts through the trials of the way."

"She shall have honor that she heeds your word, and the children of her shall have honor after her, O prince," said Rhudri O'Faelain.

It was an awkward moment and strange, as Dervail stood, veiled and gray, beside the body of Kieran, waiting to go.

"The curse came when he came," she said, looking down on him. "It seems a thousand years past — and it was but yesternight."

Smoke drifted up on the heavy air, and curled blue-white through the windows. Some of the mob, impatient of delays, had fired brush, and the falling rain drowned it, yet it bore its warning!

There was a lull in the shouting as the guard of the king formed without — and then the great gate of the castle opened and a horse was seen with woman's furnishings, and a roar went up.

"Dervail! Dervail! Dervail, the accursed of Leinster!"

Dervail stooped and picked up the dagger let fall when she ceased the torture of Kieran.

"Dervail, there will be another day for us," said Diarmod the king.

"Your lips speak, O king!" said Dervail.

She felt sullenly that the dark-eyed nun — long dead — had thrust herself between them at the end — and in a strange way she felt that the monk who had saved his last breath for curses had some way brought all this evil to be when he sunk his knife in Duffagan: that, and his words of mystic things, had changed the world for her.

He had caught her imagination and enthralled her soul by the mystic things he left in shadow, and the shadow and fear remained on her like a heavy cloak of gray.

Suddenly she turned to Ardan.

"Use your new strength — do not let the king show

himself beside me. I do not choose he should hear the wild beasts and their hate of me."

"It is their fear of you, Dervail."

"To the blind monk the thanks for that; but do not let him come."

So, in the gray rain, drearily falling, she rode out beside Ardan in the center of twice sixty of the king's guard. Her name was echoed by them a thousand times with all the terms of evil they could invent or remember, and more than once a bowman sent an arrow hurtling overhead as a warning to haste.

Once she looked back, thinking to see Diarmod on the wall, but she saw only Kauth staring down over the gateway on which the head of Duffagan was spiked.

It was the first day of the deaths of the prophecy, the "thousand years' tribute of blood," for Dervail of the Shadow!

MANY souls were sent for judgment in the slaughter done by Diarmod — and done against him in his revenges for the shame of losing her again to Breffni.

So great was the rage against her that even the castle of O'Ruarc was no safety. Widows and the children of slaughtered soldiery cried out against the curse of her beauty for which men died, and she became a secret woman in the sanctuary of Cluain-mac-noise from which great wealth went out through her hands for holy walls and holy vessels, and endless prayer.

And ever, for the rest of her life, on the sweet spring

nights of Beltain, she knelt on the cold stone of the chapel floor to undo the false magic of Duffagan on the hill of the druids. He had seen truly there, yet his reading of what he saw was not true; and the proof of it was the bridge she had built for evil to cross on.

It was not that she doubted the magic of druidcraft, but it is an ill and unlucky thing to go to the old gods after the saints have rung bells against them. Even the true things are twisted after that.

Her beauty was still on her, and the dreams of Tara were not dead.

But the fear of the words of Kieran remained as the shadow of a gray ghost, sending her to frightened prayer.

The curse of the blind monk was too heavy to be cast aside even by penance, and she walked veiled and dreamed of a day when Diarmod would again be chief of victories and change the gray cloak of dread to the royal robe of seven colors.

When the word came of his solemn banishing out of Erinn by vote of the Irish nobles, she brooded, and reckoned the wealth still hers, and waited message.

When he came again, with his English allies and the curst name "Diarmod of the Foreigners" on him, her step was light with hope, for the soldiers out of England would make him king indeed over all the proud nobles who had banished him away! The dream of Tara was still a sweet, yet fearful dream.

But when the death of Diarmod was come to him in horror, and the head of Tiernan O'Ruarc was sent to England, while his body was hung by the feet on the north wall of Dublin, then again did wild rage of the Irish burn high against the name of Dervail of the Shadow.

It was sung in songs linking her ever with the hated

invaders. Even through convent walls that hatred came — hatred against her and against the arch-traitor who had brought the English enemy to help win the throne of Erinn, because of her beauty and her daring dream.

In secret and in darkness, she was guarded to Mellifont and a new name given her for safety, and among the nuns she was never known to have worn the royal colors of a queen. And the dream of Tara was a gray horror — yet it had been told by Duffagan that kings who battled for her would sink in death, while she alone survived — and it was so.

BUT a monk whispered her name in the sunny walk of the garden one day in spring, and she looked again into the dark eyes of Ardan, who should be King of Leinster.

He held out to her a pearl and a ring she knew.

"These were to go back to you, and I made promise," he said. "I was with him at the last, when no one else was with him."

"Did his blessing come with them?" she asked. "It is said he died as Kieran died — cursing Dervail."

"They should not have told you that."

"Nay, none are telling me; it is on the air wherever the invading enemy are known and hated — Diarmod and Dervail, Dervail and Diarmod of the Foreigners! In my dreams I am hearing the curses on the two names!"

"Duffagan made such prophecy of your name and its echoes in the druid circle."

"He did. Give the pearl to some altar and wear you

the ring of your father. They are tokens of fear to me — fear of what I dared in my days of daring."

"There are other sons to wear the ring. Mine is now the monk's robe. I am a builder and a carver of stone. If the churches rise against the invading English, I will be a soldier to help undo the curse of Diarmod."

"And the curse of Dervail," she said, and wept.

He made no answer.

"Ardan," she said, "Kieran the monk said, a thousand years' bondage on Erinn for me, a thousand years of the yoke — the yoke on the bent neck of Erinn! You have had the true vision all our lives; you were the only true thing, Ardan. Can you read the days to come, and tell me the end of that curse? For the yoke is on Erinn, Ardan."

"I dare not read, or make prophecy, Dervail."

"A white road to you! The bell of vesper sounds, and it is Beltain — and a time of fear to me! Ardan, I have long had a thought unspoken. A tomb will be mine some restful night. I would that your hand had the carving of that bed. Your hand, comrade, will carve the tomb? It will be the end of the flight of the bird, Ardan."

"I will do that: I saw the form of it when we rode out through the smoke and the furious pack there at the castle in Kildare."

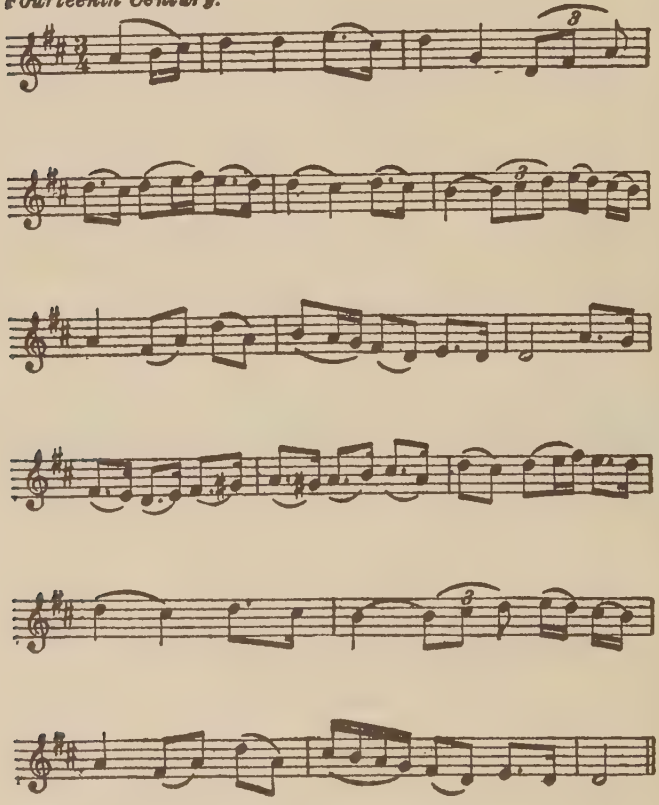
"And it will be — ?"

"The circled cross — and a gray falcon there with broken, trailing wings, Dervail."

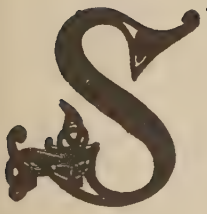
RANDUFF OF CUMANAC

Coulin

Fourteenth Century.



RANDUFF OF CUMANAC



UCH is the record of Kearmit;
— Kearmit the holy of Cumanac,
Truthful the word he has written
Truthful the warning.
This is the warning to pass through all lives to our people :
Leave all unchristened the axe arm of Erinn forever !

From Archibald T. De Nise, Attorney-at-Law.
To Major Matthew Forbes.

My dear Major: — A week ago when we ended our after-dinner talk (in the small hours of the morning), I little thought that I should so soon have evidence on your side of the argument concerning the shadowy other life in our midst. I can't say that the new evidence has convinced me, but it certainly has me rattled.

I am sending you brief excerpts from a curious old Irish volume I am eager to have you see, and also, a verbatim copy of the letter which came with it. I recall that your family was of the last hereditary historians of Ireland in the seventeenth century, and with your bookish tendencies, added to your predisposition to delve into the uncanny, it gives me a hope that your inheritance of knowledge may help me to a glimmer of light in this case.

I am sure that in reading the letter I enclose, you will not fail to recollect the statement of your friend Dartan, whose portrait of "Girl with the Hound," was in the spring exhibition. He told us that the addition of the hound to that picture was at his suggestion, and that it required con-

siderable time and trouble to find the right type of hound for the desired composition. By this you will note that the hound did not enter that family through any special desire of any member of that family.

It is easy to decide that an impressionable mind, under the influence of powerful inherited tradition of brutal ages, could work itself into a state of self-hypnosis wherein the dream became the fact. I tell myself that such is the reasonable solution of the mystery.

I work it out beautifully along those lines as I would a theoretical game of chess — and then that red-eyed hound of the picture walks across the board, and makes chaos of my chess men!

You know how much the unusual personality of the boy has interested me from the beginning. The excitement over him has been tremendous — the absolute lack of motive — her beauty, and his youth (he is not yet twenty-three) — all this would be enough to make the affair celebrated even without the very important financial position held by his brother.

I have begged the boy to help me clear up the mystery of it all, and he evidently thinks he has really given me that help in the letter I enclose, but to my mind it furnishes two mysteries instead of one.

When you have read it I want you to call me up, no matter what hour of the day or night it is, and then come and talk it over — if ever a friend needed a lifeline in the strange sea of the uncanny, I am that friend. I worked personally all night on the copy I send you — it could not be given to a copyist.

There are many who are confident that he is not the guilty one, but that his finding her there, in that condition, shocked him out of sanity. He gave himself up at once and accused himself without any excitement whatever.

He has steadily refused to tell his motive for the act, and has made not the slightest attempt to vindicate himself at any time — not even soliciting the help of an attorney.

When I offered him the services of my office he only said: "It is a kindness of you to give help at this time, and there is money in plenty to pay you, Mr. De Nise, but the work is not worth the doing, and it is I am telling you it."

More than that he has not said, and his speech has the unusual quality of fineness in it, at the same time that he uses curious phrasing suggestive of a brogue, though it is not a brogue. Perhaps it is that Irish music in his voice makes him fascinating. I have heard nothing quite like it. I hope you remember that in our former talk I spoke to you of it, and you said that prior to Elizabethan days, much learning and most of the music of England had been borrowed from the Irish scholars who took the brogue with them across the Irish Sea and made it fashionable. I assure you this lad's manner would become fashionable if it could be easily imitated. It belongs to a world older than our day. That is the baffling impression given when he speaks. It is not the words alone — it is a certain lilt in intonation as if he had been trained in rhythmic chants. Strangely enough his half-brother, who is old enough to be his father, and has had much the same educational advantages, has not a particle of this manner. He is a plain, practical, very well-to-do Anglo-Irishman, interested in certain American mines, and is a local bank director.

You will think me obsessed by this matter of a personality individual and strange — but I am only impressing on you the fact that I spoke to you a week ago of that baffling fascination in him. I want you to remember it, otherwise we should both fancy that my present impres-

sions are merely borrowed from the book and letter I send you.

Yesterday, in desperation over having the case called for next week and not a single word or suggestion of help from him, I repeated what I have said to him so often:

"Fergal, since you have promptly accused yourself and implicated no one but yourself, why — why in the name of all that's holy, do you not tell to me, your lawyer, and your friend, at least the cause of the crime you have confessed? Why will you not give me something substantial to work on? As it is, I have nothing but absurd theories — shadows to pit against a prosecution."

He looked at me with the quiet, unyouthful gray eyes, which look black under jet lashes. Then he stretched his arms drowsily as if I had fairly beaten him into speech.

"Aye, Mr. De Nise," he said, and shook his head with its purple-black wave of hair, like nothing so much as a crow's wing, except that a crow has no curls to its feathers. "Mr. De Nise, the wonder is on me, sir, as to what you would be saying if you heard in truth of the shadow I have fought in this — and the shadow I feared long — and the shadow by which I was overcome. I am not the one saying to you that shadows are little things to fight."

"You try me and see what I would say," I suggested. "Tell me every word and every thought you have on this matter; that is the right thing to do for me as well as for you." I was only too keen to encourage him, for it was the first time he had shown even a sign of sympathy toward my solicitations.

"And you would not be thinking it moonshine from some Irish rath of the fairies? And you will not be having your laugh with the councilors and the judges over the crazed Irish head of me, after I have gone the Way?" he asked.

I assured him it was too weighty an affair for laughter,

and that I was convinced that his head had the usual requisites for a head. He appeared to consider that statement thoughtfully, but finally he said:

"No — no, it has lived with me so long in silence that no words come to me for the telling. No — it will not be spoken."

I saw that he was actually striving to nerve himself for some ordeal, and I kept silence, looking over some notes I had made for the defense: few and shadowy they are, too! My presence without speech must have got on his nerves, for as if to get rid of me he spoke at last.

"I may write it as the other records of our home were written — I — may do that. Yes — that is where it would be having the right place — in the record of the clan, for it is the ending of it — yes — and the right ending."

I knew I could make nothing for his defense out of that sort of statement, so I ignored it, and left the jail after sending for paper, pen, and ink. I looked back through the bars and he was seated again, his head on his hands. I should not have been surprised to learn that he had forgotten the pen and paper were there. I have not seen him since.

But this morning there came to the office his half-brother, Raymond E. Brennan, from whom this crime has separated him beyond hope of reconciliation. Now that I think of it, they are not exactly half-brothers but by courtesy, since Brennan's father married the mother of Fergal some years after he was born, and she a widow.

In his hand he carried a small square package.

"It is the book —" he said, "the book done by Kearmit the monk in a past century. I brought it myself, for the boy asked that you be let read it. It is a treasure of his house. He knew it by heart, and thought it a great treasure — as I fancy it may be, as such things go."

His tone indicated that such things did not go far with him, though he was tolerant.

"Is it something concerning the case?" I asked.

"Not at all," he said. "It is a collection of legends and songs of his mother's house, done by a kinsman of theirs who was a monk. It is a very ancient house, Mr. De Nise. According to the records, there were princes and abbots among them when Ireland was in her glory. The work on the book is of the finest and worth seeing."

"But I have made no request for the book, nor ever heard of it," I said, for as the wrapper was taken off and I saw the richness and value of it, I hesitated to keep it. He looked at me in surprise.

"No? That is strange," he said. "Ah, the poor lad; his head is wrong; that is it."

"Did he tell you I wanted it?" I asked. "Please repeat to me exactly what he said; I am much interested in his case, and he speaks so little that every word is precious, as it may help to reveal hidden things."

"I know that, and am glad he has a good friend in you. I cannot be that. I feel that it is his head is wrong, for he was ever a strange lad, delving in ancient records, and at home with thoughts too old for his years. His mother was a safe, natural woman and there were times he seemed 'fey' to her. He was born the night his father died, but he was like neither father nor mother. She told me that when she followed my father, and asked me to care for the lad. I did my best while I could, but I do not want ever to hear the old Irish of his voice again, or touch his hand again while I live."

"What do you mean by the 'old' Irish of his voice?" I asked, and he looked at me with a little frown of perplexity.

"Do you know, Mr. De Nise, that is a hard question to answer to a man who has not heard the Gaelic about him.

That lad was not brought up to the Gaelic speech, nor his parents before him, nor their parents, yet when he spoke first — English words, mind you — he spoke it with the sound on his tongue of the old Irish. That is not because he has not gone about and heard other speech: three years he was in France and in Spain. There was an old branch of his people came to Galway from Spain in the very old times. His mother said he came by the blackness of his hair from the Spanish kindred, for her people were fair always. But, as I was saying, no travel took the touch of the old tongue off him. You must have noticed, sir, yourself; it is as if he speaks in English but thinks in the old Irish."

Now that explained exactly that baffling music of his intonation, and I was glad to have it cleared up for me; if cleared up it is!

"Yes — he has always been strange, but he was a lovable lad at that," said Brennan. "I know it was his head went wrong all in a flash, and I hope the court so decides. But when I try to think kindly of him, there comes again before my eyes that awful sight of — ah — I cannot even speak of it yet."

He walked to the window and stood with his back to me. I could see he was much agitated.

"Do not try to speak of it," I said, "only try to tell me the word he sent concerning the book."

Brennan gave me a letter from his pocket and walked again to the window while I read it.

There was no heading to the letter; it began abruptly in clear, decided penmanship.

"I know the sorrow of you — yet it may be there is a deeper sorrow I am now hiding. I know the hate of your heart for me — and all the world is with you in that.

"I am not sending to you in any complaining, for things are written, and the reasons are not shown to mortals, yet we must abide by that writing.

"I am sending to ask a favor for the man who would save — if he can — the last of my family, which he cannot. I would have lent to him for his reading, the book of the annals of our house. Not the genealogy in Gaelic with its translation, but the smaller book with the ivory cover and the silver clasps. It is the legends and songs of our bards in the other days before the harps of Ireland were broken by the mailed fist of the enemy. The man I want to have read it is a lover of books, and nothing like the 'Book of Kearmit' has he seen; not but what kindred clans had jewels of books, and more of them than in other lands, but the Saxon, like the Dane, in their plunderings, stripped them of the precious coverings, and left the vellum to rot or burn. They are few and rare at this day.

"The sorrow is with me for the reason that your life is in shadow. Always first in my heart was held my love of you. I am proud now to be knowing that, and on a day to be . . . *you* will know it!

"On that day I may again call you brother — and the waiting for it is long to me. "FERGAL."

"That is the first word he has ever sent me, since that night," said Brennan, "so I brought the book at once. I would do much more to be of use to any mortal in misery, but hear him, or see him, I hope I shall never."

While he spoke a messenger came in with a package for me. I still held Brennan's letter in my hand. As I glanced at the envelope just received I saw that the writing was the same — it was the first communication I had ever received from Fergal.

I opened it quickly, and found many large pages closely written; folded around them was a note. It said:

"Good Friend—

"A book of old Irish legends will be brought to your hand this day. Before reading the letter I send in this, I will ask you to read the book. There is one tale of the olden days I would have you reading. It is called *Randuff and White Enora.*"

I turned to Brennan. "I should like after all to look at the book," I said. "Fergal will no doubt tell me why he wishes me to see it."

Then thanking him for coming with it personally, I let him out as expeditiously as possible in my eagerness to see what the boy had sent me. It was a great temptation to read the letter first, but I put it aside and opened the book.

IT is a curiosity in book-making and binding. The ivory panels of the back with their scroll work of silver were done by no prentice hand, and the lettering on the vellum is so fine I had to use a magnifying glass to get all the beauty of line in the illuminated initials. How the deuce did those Irish monks of the old days do such work with quill pens and no glasses? Whoever "Kearmit of Clan Cumanac" might have been, his work was that of an artist, as you will see when you come.

I did not linger long over the artistic binding or ornamental pen work, but turned at once to the story Fergal had mentioned. It was called *The Sad Tale of Randuff and White Enora.* It was written in verse, as many others were. I find that Randuff means "The Dark, Handsome One."

IN Tormond, north of the Shannon, dwelt the clans of Cumanac before the foot of the invader brought the curse on the land, and sent westward their mercenaries to wall themselves in, and to carve prayers in the stone over the gates, that the sons of the land might

not rise in their vengeance and make ashes of their women and children as have the Saxons with the "mere Irish."

But Brian is dust in Dunpatrick, and Cormac the wise has been dust a thousand years in Rosnaree, and besides them no king has arisen in strength to hold together the tribes, and strong to do righteousness on the adventurers who have their hirelings in mail to help them make profits off the land.

And of the last law of Edward's councilors has come the evil of the death of Randuff — the sweetly dark one, cried now by the woman, and mourned by the very trees of the forests he had love for! Randuff of the princes of Cumanac, Randuff of the sweet voice, and that voice chanting the glories above all sweetness of mortal: Grief on the loss of that one!

Her name was Enora of the Saxons, and when she spread her net, and looked on him, it was a drug to his soul. The robe of a scholar he forgot, and holiness he forgot, and only marriage with her was the dream walking with him all the night. To his brothers in kindred he told his love and it needed not the telling, for all could read the wonder of it in his eyes — shadowed eyes the women of Cumanac are wailing!

The new law of the invader forbids bonds of marriage between their Saxon men and our Irish women — and much more is the strength of the law against daughters of English taking a name from an Irish clan, even though it be a princely clan. Grief on that day!

So it stands, and what is one man, even the youth Randuff, to do against that? What is one man to do with the pride of his clan like a black rage back of him? And their friendship and their love hidden from him? And their rule hard against him for that he would not tear the

face of her out of his breast; and would not forget the White Enora of the sea-blue eyes?

Sons of lords of Spain sailed into the Shannon mouth. In their own ship they came, and young they came, and they were his kindred. Love in their own hearts made them brothers to Randuff, and they alone knew of the stolen nights of him in her secret chamber. Only they knew that he fared forth as a *duine*—leading the steed of her father . . . as a servant unknown walked Randuff, son of princes, to follow the white feet of the woman of the other shore. Grief on that day! None but the sons of the lords of Spain knew it, and they knew it.

Sweet the plot for love was the plot of Randuff and the sons of the lords of Spain—and sweet the sailing to be when the bird of love flew south with them, for that was their dream!

But the maid of the secret nights had a long look in the blue eyes of her, and the look was long for a man who could put her near to the throne in the court of Edward. Such was her look, and such was the hope, and that was not in power of Randuff, son of prince of Cumanac, nor of any other of Erinn's princes, and she grew in fear of the love-nights she had loved so rashly, and in fear of the lover who had dared much, and would dare more.

The Night of nights came when the sails were loosed, and horses were under the wall, and the lover in the secret door for the last time. And in fear of his wrath when she should say to him "No," and in fear of her own kindred if they thought the truth of her—she took by her side a wolfhound of her knowing, and a keen knife to give help to the last. Grief on the night!

With fair treacherous words, and sad words, she told him the will of her kinsmen was heavy on her, and the fear on her was a great fear, and never again could the moon

light their love-nights. Her beauty had been coveted by an earl of England, and her parting from wild Ireland would be a long parting.

So it was, and when in love his arms went around her, the wolfhound leaped to his throat, and her knife found the way to his heart. Grief on that night!

The cries of her were the cries of a child in fright, and her words were of terror, and these were her words: That to save herself pure from a man of the Irish wilds, she had used the knife, and she stood there holding back the hound from the blood of Randuff, and told this thing, and the eyes of Randuff on her, and the breath of life going from him!

Her kinsmen came there — and their rage was a great and terrible rage, and above all the rage was that of Alwynn, a priest of her blood, and it may be he is druid, too, for he is not christian surely ; and it was the curse of curses he put on the youth there, not alone that he should die unshriven, but that no sons should ever again be born to the name, and the pride of the race, and its fruitfulness should die out even as the youth's blood was flowing from the heart of him. Grief on that night !

And the strength of that hate, and the words of it, wakened Randuff out of the death spell, and in a great slowness he spoke again, and the people who heard it went cold, and the wanton white thing fell swooning, and none of them are forgetting it, and this is what he said there:

"When the last of our clan's blood is gone from this life,
Will but be when Enora finds death by this knife.
If no sons shall be born to keep honored our name,
From the grave one will rise to give death for this shame.
And you err, White Enora, at thought that the moon
Will no more light our meetings: a vision — a swoon
Comes gray on my senses, yet through it I see
Another life living for you — and for me!"

Death took him, and no mortal is knowing what meaning was in his words. The Spanish kinsmen told their tale, and sailed for the south, and earth glory and sinful glory are the portion of Enora of the wolfhound. She is near the throne surely, and the children of her are honored by her own name forever by the royal will.

This is the tale of Randuff and White Enora. It is put down by the hand of Kearmit of Cumanac as a sign against that family forever. No honor, no friendship, is ever to be taken by gift or grace of the people of her blood, and no other thing forever but war should be with that people. As White Enora with her wolfhound, and her knife for the lover, so is that blood to the blood of the tribes whose land they have coveted, and have left ravaged. May memory be with our people in the Day of days!

"By the Elements, and the Father, and Son, and Sanctified Spirit."

IN a different but clear hand two pages were added:

Such is the record of Kearmit, Kearmit, the holy of Cumanac,
Truthful the word he has written — blessed the writing!
Truthful the warning to tribes of the Cumanac,
Truthful that warning!
Against Alba whose own sons they sold in the market,
and they not in hunger,
Against that people whose daughters were coming like calves
and sold like the cattle,
Against that land whose mothers were sold
and they with the unborn! —
They are the men lacking blood but the blood of the liver,
They are the men. The diolamhan fight all their battles.

Loud is their laugh that Brabanters are fighting their battles,
loud in their mocking!
Evil was ours in the buying of children and mothers,
evil in bringing that breed.
Shadow to us for that breeding:
treacheries born from the blood of their daughters.
Weakness of heart in our clans buying slaves out of Alba.
Slaves have been made of that buying; — slaves are our princes!
Sad forever the purchase — Erinn in shadow is witness!
Sing death forever 'gainst compact or truce with that people.
Leave us forever unchristened one hand of our clansmen:
The axe hand of battle for these who have sold us their daughters.
Watch you forever 'gainst smiles, or sweet words, or hand claspings.
Think on their mothers once sold to our men for our usage,
Swearing of friends' oath with them! Unchristened the axe arm
of Erinn.
Unchristened the axe arm forever to use in the cleaving
Of tribes who would barter a friend as they sold their own
daughters.
This is the warning to pass through all lives to our people,
This, and the maid of the wolfhound, and she with the dagger.
That is the soul out of Alba — the white maid Enora!
Leave all unchristened the axe arm of Erinn forever!

. . . . . .

I finished the old chronicles, wondering why I had been asked to read of the intensity of the ancient hates, though I acknowledge that the form of the original is better than my faulty translation from the Latin. Then I opened his letter of which I send you an exact copy. I can't let the original go — yet I want you to be entirely acquainted with all the evidence of which I am possessed. Call me up soon as you read it. Here is the letter:

My Good Friend—

Now that I have put my hand to it, you shall have your wish. To tell you will lighten the heart of me, and now that the end is so near I can see no harm coming from the

truth. No man with the cleverness of you would take into court a letter such as this must be, and you will not tell the one man it would hurt — that you could not do; the worst you will do is to think me mad.

If it is so now, then I was mad at birth. Yet no one thought it. I was different but no worse than that, and I will tell it you.

My mother was of the blood of the Cumanac, though the name of the tribe is dead. Sons were not born — only daughters. The genealogy of our people is clear back to the days of Diarmod of the Foreigners, who is in hell if there be one! The women of our house married scholars, and into families of scholars. The record of that blood was the record of a province, and there was no generation of it lost.

I am different from my family. They were fair, I am dark as our ancient Spanish cousins. My mother wept often on my birthdays but would not say why to me. Later I learned that I was born the night of the death of my father. There were times when she cried out that I was born with his brains, and my questions of ancient things frightened her, for I spoke as a child of things I could not know as a child. She thought I had "the sight," and she was frightened by it, for she was a quiet, God-fearing woman, with only dread on her for the side of life she could not see.

Because of that dread I grew silent about many things. I wanted to ask why, when I closed my eyes to sleep, I so often rose above my body and drifted there, held only by the thin invisible cord, waiting for the slumber of the body to release me until I could go free — where?

I wanted to ask why certain people, though dressed in sober friese, yet had rainbow rays of light visible — while others had clear white — and others the color of gloom.

I wanted to ask of the faint, sweet music of harps, heard in nights of clear cold and white snow under the moon — often I was out at dawn to find track of the musicians whose playing was unearthly sweet.

But I was only a boy, and I had learned to watch and learn if others were in the same wonder, but it was of no use. There were no tracks in the snow, and no one seemed to me to have ears or eyes for my mysteries.

So I grew to live much within myself, and my mother was a lonely woman. When the father of Raymond wed with her, it brought more content to us both. I think she feared the care of me as I grew older, and Raymond was the sort she could best understand.

It was after the marriage that I first saw the land of our ancient people. In Galway my mother's husband had bought an old estate, and Raymond had great joy in plans for showing me the old castle — the secret dungeon — the hidden stairway and subterranean gallery whose exit they had not yet discovered.

That was the time I had the first glimmer of light as to where I had flown while my body slept!

For I turned to the hidden stairway before Raymond could tell me, and I took them to the ruins of an old monastic cell, and told them to lift a slab there to find the underground entrance — and it was there as I said.

My mother wept when they told her. I said I had dreamed it.

In looking over the ancient documents of transfer of the lands, its history was clear to the days of Edward the Third, when a beautiful daughter of the Saxon owner had become a court favorite, and left the wilds of Connaught to carry her graces to the eastern market. The name of her was Enora. I was reading Latin by that time and

found her name in our own records by Kearmit. Raymond came by some deeds giving names of her descendants, and it was a game of interest to trace them down through the centuries.

Happiness was with me in that place; I had never heard the Gaelic until I heard it there, and the knowing of it seemed breathed into me with the air, for I was soon delving in every corner for songs of the ancient bards and seeking out old singers, and hearing over and over their tales of the breaking of Ireland's harps by England's laws that her music might be killed forever.

The tales were sad enough, but I was only a lad and no sadness stayed on me, for I was in more happiness than ever before. In my early childhood I had been long ill, and debarred from ranging in freedom the field or the mountains, but in old half-Spanish-looking Galway I walked into new life — and new strength. The nights and days were filled with the harmonies of mere living. I was as one who has hungered long for full warm heartbeats and who grows drunken with the rhythmic music of that pulsing — all the world and the harmonies of it were as chorus to me.

I enjoyed life with every breath of me — not as my mother and Raymond did, in quiet and serene, but with the lilt of a singing gladness that was but a reflection of every flower — an echo of every bird-song and the joyous, thunderous rhythm of the tide with its menace of mysteries.

The Gaelic came to me as though in sudden remembrance, and I lived in the very spirit of the ancient legends of the Land Wonderful where turrets of sunken cities are seen in a clear day at the ebb, and the magic island of the "Land of the Ever Young" rises above the waters to the west every seven years.

Ireland is the tragic "different" land from every other. The wish is with me that I could tell to you the influences in that land — the inherited influences by which an unread peasant can recite the loves and battles of Queen Maeve, and the flight of Grania and her Diarmod, as if the passions of them had been in our own day rather than twenty centuries back in the shadows. Every well and river, every hill and battle-plain, has its legend of god or goddess, of the Danaans or the later wondrous Fionn and the Comrades. Nothing is old there, because the spirit of it is young. It is why the music of it has had soul enough to reach through the world — Teuton and Briton and Gaul borrowed and renamed the music of Ireland and the legends of Ireland, even while Britain smashed Ireland's harps lest the bards keep alive forever her kinship with the Spirits of Beauty.

Only fragments of the music are left to her — death and exile were the penalties for giving shelter to a bard, or giving ear to his harping. An old man of Laherdane told me a human life had been paid twice over for every note of every ancient Irish song preserved to us in this day. All that is left are a few airs to which the moderns strive to fit words, or a few verses to which they strive to fit music, yet the beauty of the fragments are worth all the strivings.

By this you will see that, as a lad, I was overswept by the great wave of ancientness of the land — and the charm of it. You have seen Raymond, and you will know without any telling that he lived beside me for years, yet never saw the Ireland I was enthralled by. We had the different eyes and the different heart for its reading.

I thought often enough how strange it was that while he was near double the years of me, yet it was the new

things of today he was alive to: the trading of nations, and the financing of American mines, and such like, with never a thought of even the policies of kingdoms further in the past than his own generation ; while I lay hidden from my English tutor on the cliffs above the bay, and tried to picture the gray-blue mist by which the magical Danaans made a wall between themselves and the foreign invaders while their hidden palaces under the green hills were being made ready for their using.

I knew the magical and majestic Danaans of the land had dwindled in earth-power with the centuries, until in our day they are spoken of as fairies, or earth-spirits, but that lessened none of their interest to me. They had, for some mystic reason, drawn the veil of the invisible over their life. But the life did endure, and was often close akin to certain living mortals.

For hours I would lie thus in the grasses, listening to the whisper of winds and waves, singing with them at times, listening for echoes, until the soft flight of velvet-winged bats from the cliff caves sent me home in the dark to tell my mother and my tutor the many echoes of ancient years I had heard out there with only sea and sky, bird and wind voices for my telling.

I did not mean to speak falsely when I averred, despite lectures from my tutor and scoldings from my mother, that the birds did speak, and that the wind did bring whispering voices which none but I could hear. I heard them, felt their presence, and at times the veil between this and that other life was so thin that I could see the glad sunlight on faces that came — I knew not whence ! Slowly, as I grew older, they faded — as do the many other dreams that come to children.

But the echo of the whispers remained; through all of life they have seemed to prepare me for what was to come.

And if my sentence from the court is death, I feel that the same voices will greet me again, and will say: "Rest you now; the time has been long to you since you wandered away. Your work in that life is over. Rest you with us."

So I grew up, my mind full of fancies; and they were odd and foolish, and frightening to my mother.

"Sorrow of me," she would say, scoldingly. "You are like a changeling of different blood. You do naught but dream in idleness, and see unchristian things that are the outgrowth of lazy brains."

It would be of no use in the world to tell her that at times I dreamed true — like the secret stairway, and the lost underground hall to which I had found the lichen-covered door. To say aught to her of these things in argument only sent her to her prayers — or to her priest, who deemed me but a hopeless liar, and an unrepentant one.

Only Raymond did not scold. "Never you mind, mother, he is but a boy," I have often heard him say; "and why should he do aught but dream and sing old songs if his happiness is in that? He has income enough to be at no one's expense but his own."

In our house were many old books of the tribes of the Cumanac, and quaint old pictures of our people. My mother never looked at them. She only had care of them because her mother had known them as treasures. Kings had been of our family in the past, and mystical druid rulers in the dim shadow ages. The old legends and traditions over which I pored as I grew older told me of the beauty of our women, the bravery of our men, and the high esteem in which they were held even by their enemies of the east and north. They lived in the feudal grandeur of those days — kings in their own territory.

Then the curse came!

All those tales of a life so different to that around me made a lasting impression on my imagination. I seemed to live in the lives of those who were gone centuries before I was born. And when alone in some old room of the castle with my books about me, or alone in the hills in the night with my memories of dreams about me, I had strange temptings at times. If my self-confidence had equaled my convictions, I would have turned scribe and supplied many missing chapters in the old histories. Strangely enough, it was not history at all that I wanted to write, but it was the lost songs of Ancient Ireland, and they held themselves high in the air — the words never came near — only fugitive melodies and the thrilling harp!

I think now I should have written the history as it came clear in my mind, and at times in scribbling idleness to my pen's point. The flashes of the ancient life were as a schooling for my mind and my hand. I think the songs would have followed if I had done good work. . . . It is my grief that I have lost the chance for this life. They come not again to a closed door.

WHEN I was seventeen my mother died. That left Raymond and me all alone, for his father had already gone the Way. He was like a father to me always in his care and the quietness of his love. One day he came to me with some papers he had found in an old desk. My mother, and her mother before her, had taken no heed to them; but they concerned a property in Scotland to which he said I was the heir through an ancient branch of our family.

"What will we do?" I asked him. Scotch cousins did not seem near to me. That people had helped break the harps.

"I must go myself and see about it," he said; "it is not a large property and may have gone to the Crown through being unclaimed. But by going I may at least find in it some old books such as you fancy, or some old pictures for you to dream over."

That is what he said: "some old books or old pictures for you to dream over."

Aye! The dreams he made true for me by that going!

In that way he went from me to be back in a month, but letter after letter came, pleading business details to be arranged. My claim was made good, but it required much attention to settle the matters connected with it. So time went on until many weeks had passed. Then at last came a letter which explained all, and it said:

"Fergal, my brother—

"I have news to tell you—news I hope you will be glad to hear. Tomorrow I am to be married. It all seems very sudden to send you word thus, but she has been left alone in the world by death—herself the last of the ancient family of the Galway castle, who, I have heard you say, were your forefathers' enemies ages ago. Her name is Ednah; she is the last of their line, and you the last of yours. I give her to you as a sister, and thus we will bury the old hates of Erin and Albion."

I read this letter as in a dream. I had never thought of the marrying of Raymond. I re-read it, trying to remember all the tales of our old feud with her people. Why did that one of Randuff and White Enora come first and keep uppermost in my mind? Parts of the others were forgotten. It alone remained undimmed in my memory. I tried to put it aside and think only of Raymond. I thought I succeeded, at least in the daytime.

I was out on the cliffs when they arrived, and did not see them at once. I came in vexed with myself for forgetting the hour he was to come. I found them in a room where our family portraits were hung. I could see them through the door — he so large and massive, she so slight and fair. His arm was about her shoulders.

I hesitated; I was only a lad, and our family had been one with family affections, but little of outward sign given of them — no kisses, no embraces, even from my mother; and the sight of that half-embrace was a strange one to me. It made me feel more keenly my own aloneness. Because of the shyness on me I waited until they should move. They had stopped before my picture.

"Who is that?" she asked, and her voice was music.

"It is my brother Fergal," said Raymond. "He should be here now — the idle, dreaming fellow. He has forgotten. Come, we will go and look for him."

"Wait," she said. "I want to look at his picture. How different from all the rest it is. Somewhere, sometime . . . I have seen a face like that, or a picture, but where — where?"

"I have no doubt there are many such happy, careless faces among boys," said Raymond.

"But is it quite careless?" she asked. "When one looks at it long it grows sad, then stern — and the eyes — ah, those eyes! If he looks at me in that way I shall fear him, Raymond."

Raymond put his hand over her eyes, and laughed and kissed her on the mouth. I went chill in the heart at that kiss.

"What a foolish child you are," he said. "You and Fergal are alike in your imaginings."

Then they turned and saw me. Raymond looked so

happy and so different that I was glad. But I do not know if I can find words to tell how she looked.

She was fair and babyish, with little ways and movements like a white kitten. Her hair was the yellow of the cornsilk, and her eyes as blue as the violet which grows always in the shade. She reached out her hands to me in a pretty childish way.

"We are to be brother and sister," she said. "I hope we shall all be very happy together."

I barely touched the hands of her — such pretty hands — but that touch tingled through all my blood. I stammered and blushed with embarrassment. I had known so few women, and none well, and I had never seen any as beautiful as my brother's wife. She was dainty and delicate as the snow maiden that fades when brought down to the level where humanity lives.

Perhaps that was why I feared to touch her, even. If I did by chance, my hand would tremble and my face flush. She laughed over it to Raymond.

"He will never be my brother," she said. "He is as shy of me as if I were still a stranger."

One day Raymond spoke to me of it:

"Why are you so foolish," he asked. "Ednah wonders why you have dislike of her. You are almost of an age — born in the same year — and should be better friends. Yet you range the mountains alone more than ever. Even the books are forgotten by you."

In answer I asked to go away to school, or to travel. I had never before cared for anything but our old house and the forest near, or the musty books in the time-worn cases. Now the air had grown close; all the quiet of the forest, all the hum in the grasses, could not bring to me their old, drowsy rest; and the wind no more carried echoes of whispering voices!

"Perhaps it is best that you should go," said Raymond. "Travel may cure you of this strangeness and shyness. I shall give up this place for a while and cross seas. Ednah has horror of these old walls, and will stay in no room of them alone. When you join us again you will find us in some sunnier place."

SO I made my farewells and went wandering. For three years I never saw Ireland. All that time I was going, going—never at rest. And though through every hour of it I longed to go back, and feared to, I could not explain whence the fear came.

Then Raymond wrote to me in Spain to join them here. I was almost twenty-two. There were property matters to be arranged, and my presence was required. I am not sure if I was glad or not. I did not sleep at all, and I sailed on the first ship.

Once on the sea the fear fell away. Almost the music of dreams came back to me. The three years of wandering had driven out the dreams and remembrance had not been happiness.

But the ship to the west brought me into starry nights of sweetness and wonderful dreams when all the world was of hope, for the fear was gone on the waves.

Raymond did not expect me so soon, and I found their new home all alone. Only Ednah was there. She ran down the steps to meet me. Back of her was a tall hound.

"Fergal, Fergal!" she said, and the blue eyes of her were bright as if with tears.

I am not knowing if I spoke to her—I think I did not.

But I took her hand. She offered her cheek as if for a brother's caress, but I did not touch it. I only looked at her, and we walked up the steps together, and the hound followed.

"I am glad it is today you came," she said. "I am all alone. Ah, we have wanted you so often! The world felt so empty — empty as all my life used to be! Now all will be different — you are here."

She showed me a portrait lately finished of her with the hound at her knee. The artist had asked that one be secured for the painting, and Raymond had tried to find one to look most like an Irish wolfhound for the harsh note of contrast with her own whiteness. She told this frankly as a child, and laughed because the dog would not follow Raymond when she was near. Then she showed me all their wonderful new home, and the Italian garden above the river, and a wonderful pergola where yellow roses and crimson roses burned like flame.

We sat in that dream place through the sunset. I listened and said little. Her glad voice was as cool, sweet rain that falls on sun-scorched sands. I was beside her until the dusk, drinking in tones of music, but never once did I look in her eyes.

And Raymond came when the night fell.

I scarce know how to tell of the days to follow. The fear and shyness came back to me. But I was older and could hide it more than when she first came to my sight, and Raymond had pleasure to think I was feeling more friendly toward the lovely wife. But I avoided being alone with her, and with the tall hound ever her shadow.

Even when she rode horseback above the cliffs of the river the hound was at the heels of her horse, and was known widely by the new friends of Raymond. The portrait was shown in a great gallery, and was called "Beauty

and the Beast." But you have seen that, and know the pride of Raymond that she was his. He housed and dressed and adored her as queen of the world.

But it was herself gave long, strange looks to me, and looks of question they were, too. Everyone sought her except myself, and she was noting that, even though the eyes of Raymond were blind by his love for us both.

One day I came in with scarlet blossoms for which she had asked.

She was coming down the great stairs and smiled at me.

"How lovely," she said; "we have dinner-guests to-night, but I shall wear no jewels. I want only those scarlet blossoms in my hair; bring them in here to the music-room."

I followed her, and stood there holding the flowers; but she did not take them. She only looked at me and laughed a little.

"One would think me an old witch-wife of your Irish hills, you shun me so, brother Fergal," she said, "and I think I shall make you do penance here. You must fasten the blossoms in my hair with your own hands. You should learn to be gallant, Fergal, else when you meet your lady-love you will never know how to woo her."

I held the flowers in silence and tried to fasten them. My fingers were shaking. The perfume of her hair made me drunk as wine.

"Your hands are nervous doing work so new to them," she said, and laughed. "You foolish boy, what can I do more than to fit up this room for you only, with its Irish harp and its Irish music and a pot of Shamrock in each window. It is enough to make any other man love me — but not Fergal!" she said, and sighed, and then laughed.

I could not answer her words of light mocking, and the great hound, stretched at her feet, arose and the bristles

on his neck stood upright as my hands touched her hair. He was ever on guard for her, and it was a jest that she had to put chain on him for the lessons with a dancing-master. He would allow no stranger to touch her, and me he was ever watching in jealousy.

Raymond's wife noted it, and laughed.

"He has the jealousy of a man in love," she said, "but you know nothing of that jealousy, for it is only books and old music you have in your mind. You are almost a year older than I, and have traveled around the world, yet are afraid of women. And to think I once dreamed of fearing you — or your picture — that is amusing to me now! I have never once seen your eyes look in a rage as I thought they might. But it is seldom you favor me even with a glance. I doubt if you could tell the color of my eyes."

So she chattered on, smiling up at me, mocking at my silence and at my shaking hand.

"I have fear that this will not be done to your pleasure," I said at last.

She laughed again. "Fergal," she said, "is it all women you are fearing, or only me?"

As she spoke her head was turned to look up at me. I still held the flowers in her hair. My wrist was near her cheek. In turning, her lips touched it. Perhaps it was accident. I do not know.

The golden hair of her was over my hands, her red mouth on my wrist, and the wonderful child-eyes of her looking into my own. She raised one hand and clasped my arm. I threw it from me with a force that staggered her back to the wall, and the tall hound pressed close to her and growled deep threat to me. The flowers in my hand I dashed to the floor, and I left her there like that. As I went down the steps I heard my name called by her, but I never looked back.

That night I spent in the forest.

When morning came again I told Raymond that my wandering years were not over. The Foreign Legion of France might need another sabre. I was willing to offer one to her — or to Ireland, if need arose in the south. And it was not a time for youth to be easy in comfort in any house.

Raymond laughed, and said I could send money enough to buy them a seasoned soldier instead of myself, and told me he would take it ill if I sailed before Ednah's birthday, for it was in his mind to give an entertainment that I might meet their many new friends. His wife joined us in silence and clasped his arm and stood with eyes downcast. She looked very white and very childish. We had not spoken.

"You young people have been dull here," her husband said. "Suppose we have a ball for your birthnight; something to repay the great hospitality of the people. What do you say, my child? I must not have you lonely."

She spoke her pleasure, and, the choice of entertainment being left to her, it was a masquerade she made choice of. "It is more gaiety," she said.

"A masque it shall be, then," said Raymond. "And you, Fergal, must have no thought of leaving us until after that."

"Are you going again?" she asked, and her blue eyes had pleading in them.

I could make her no answer.

"So he threatens," said Raymond. "You must help me to persuade him to be sensible and stay where he is. Perhaps we can find him a sweetheart at the ball. You must get a fine dress, Fergal, and we shall have it the night Ednah is twenty-two."

I was arranging some books in a case while they talked.

I did not want to look in her eyes and see the appeal there. One of the volumes slipped from my hand to the floor. It was our old book of legends, and it lay open at the tale of Randuff and White Enora.

"Here is my dress," I said, and tried to laugh. "What was good enough for our ancestors centuries ago is good enough for me now. I shall wear the dress of Randuff of Cumanac. Here is a description of it in the legend."

Ednah stared at me. "Randuff of Cumanac," she half whispered, "do you mean that 'Randuff' of the Lady Enora's song?"

"Yes, if that is what you are calling him," I said, "but the song I never heard."

"How do you know of him?" asked Raymond.

"I heard the rhyme of the killing often when I was a child," she said. "My grandmother never tired repeating the old tales of our ancestors. It gave me fear of the wild Irish. How bitter those old traditions made the people! The Lady Enora was sung as a very brave maid. Grandmother always spoke of the Cumanac as our enemy. Had she lived she would not have allowed me to be under the same roof with a descendant of theirs — never!"

"How ridiculous in this age to remember the old feudal hates," said Raymond. "I do not think the mother of Fergal knew even the legend. She read only books of piety, and was too sensible to take heed of hates so unchristian."

"It may seem silly to you," said his wife, "but my grandmother was thought a wise woman."

"What will be your dress?" asked Raymond, stroking her hair in a caress.

"I think I shall not tell either of you that," she said. "It will be much more amusing to puzzle you. I shall receive my guests in evening dress and then mask in what-

ever I decide upon. You must not coax me to tell. On my birthnight you must let me have my own way."

My friend, this story may seem strangely long to you, but when I write of it, every word, every look, is coming back to me.

No persuasions could induce Raymond to mask the night of the ball. "I am too old," he protested. "At forty-five, people lose zest for masques."

My dress they called a success, but Ednah said:

"There is one thing needed for that costume: you have no dagger."

"It was forgotten by the costumer," I told her, "and I had none that would answer."

"Wait," she said, "I have one — an heirloom. How old it is I do not know. We had several in an old chest. Grandmother knew the history of each, but I never could remember them. I kept a very ancient Spanish one for a paper knife: I am sure it will do."

She left us, running along the hall, the great hound leaping beside her in play, her white ball dress fluttering like wings; to see her thus none would have thought such a childish butterfly could be the hostess of the evening.

Raymond looked after her in pride and great content.

"Like a child she is," he said. "Just as thoughtless and innocent; twenty-two today, and does not look seventeen. Ah, Fergal, there is only one life for a man: you must also get a wife. You will be more content to stay home from wars then."

I had no answer for him, and he laughed at me as he watched her come back with the dagger. It swung by a silver chain and there were jeweled clasps to the chain. The handle formed a cross, and the sheath was oddly carved and inlaid; the blade . . . but you have seen it!

I tried to clasp it, but the fastenings were difficult to manage.

"Clasp it for him, Ednah," said Raymond. "I must have this hound chained for you, else no mask will serve you or no stranger be let dance with you." So he spoke and laughed and left us alone.

The chain of the girdle was in her hand and her eyes on mine. "Shall I?" she asked.

"If you please," I answered, "since your husband bids."

"I am more kind to you than you are deserving," she said, and sighed. "You have not even said you were sorry for hurting me that day."

"If ever I have hurt you, I am sorry," I said as coldly as I could, but I feared while I spoke that she would know the tremble in my throat. I might have been brutal that day, but to tell her so I did not dare; I was afraid. And looking down at the bent golden head of her, I told myself that never another day should see me under the roof with my brother's wife.

"You are hurting me now," she whispered. "Fergal, you are hurting me always when you speak to me with that ice in your voice."

"Never will you hear it after tonight," I answered. "I am going tomorrow."

She stared at me, and put out her hand as if about to speak, then dropped it and walked away.

The ball was a very gay one. I surprised Raymond by showing no shyness whatever among the ladies who thronged the rooms. He said the mask gave me boldness. He was trying to discover his wife, and had failed.

"Several times I thought I had found her," he said, "but I am always mistaken. She has been very cunning. If you find her first, Fergal, bring her to me."

I danced and jested with many, but in none did I discover her.

At last, wearying of all the gay pretenses, I went out into the night. The Italian garden above the cliffs was deserted by others for the dance, and the pergola of the yellow roses was my own. It was there I had sat that first evening of her witcheries. And there I sat again with my head in my hands — wishing for the dawn that would take me away without offense to the man I felt deep love for.

THE moon was at full and the grounds almost as day except under the thick vines. Music came faintly to my ears through the open windows, and dew lay over the grass like dust from the stars. A bed of petunias near me exhaled that fragrance which the moon, but never the sun, has power to draw out.

The peace of it all oppressed me. The perfume of the flowers was sweet, but I hid my face in my hands. I knew that the time was past when the scent of flowers or music of winds or my own dreams would bring content to me. Better, I thought, if I were dead and forgotten as the Randuff whose dress I wore.

How long I was sitting there I do not know. At last I felt that I was not alone, and looked up. By my side was a girl in a dress such as I had never seen save in antique pictures. It was of something with lights in it like the waves of the ocean when the moon shines. Her face I could not see for the misty lace over it.

The glamour of the scene was about me. I forgot the

crowds dancing within; I forgot all save the presence of this girl, or was it a dream-girl like the visions of my childhood?

"Who are you?" I asked, and there was awe and wonder on me.

"Do you not know?" came the answer in a whisper. "Have you forgotten, Randuff of Cumanac?"

"Randuff?" I repeated, scarcely knowing what I said. My brain seemed whirling and the music of the dance drifted away. Through it I heard the muffled, far-off bay of a hound!

The girl touched me with her hand, and I held it fast. Her presence was an intoxication of joy to me. I have no words for the telling of the witcheries I felt myself yielding to. Was I Fergal or was I Randuff? I could not tell.

"Of course, Randuff," she whispered with her lips on my throat, "and I am your Enora who has found you again. This night only is ours out of all the years of life. Were you wishing for me?"

"I was," I said, and I spoke truth. It seemed to me that all of life had been nothing but waiting for that one night, and her near me.

"And you are not afraid now?" she whispered.

And I said: "There is no fear on me of anything but to lose you again, as we have lost each other until now."

"We have only this night out of all the others," she repeated. "Give me your kisses, Randuff."

And then I knew what a woman's kiss meant to a man, though it was not as a woman I was thinking of her, but as a spirit of the far past come back for that one night. My arms were about her—her face to mine; broken, tender words were whispered in my ears. What I replied I do not know. I felt her kiss on my mouth; I heard her breathless whispers.

And back of it all I heard the wild baying of a hound!

"One night of life together, my Randuff," she sighed. "Is it not worth more than a long lifetime apart?"

I could not speak — I could not! She lifted her hand to bring my face again to hers. Some jewel in her bracelet caught in the lace mask, and the veil of lace fell from about her head.

The moon shone full in her eyes through the rose vines of the pergola, and the soul of me was frozen there, for the girl who had witched me by the touch of her fingers — whose lips I had kissed, whose love I had taken — was the wife of my brother!

I tried to rise; I could not. I tried to speak, but my tongue seemed paralyzed. She must have felt something of what I wanted to say, for terror was on her, and she clung to me, whispering:

"Don't, Fergal; don't look at me like that! I could not have you go away so. Now, though you go, I will know your love is mine. Nothing can change that. Your love is mine!"

I knew she was speaking the truth. Our lives were each other's, though the bond of it was sin. I heard her whispers in a strange, double sense, for in clearness, as though there was no other sound under the heavens, I was hearing the bay of a hound, and him on a trail!

She came closer to me. Her lips were touching mine which were locked, giving no response to her caresses. I was as a man struck dumb with the horror. My brother — who had been like a kind father to me, always!

When I could hear her again, she was whispering:

"Why must you go — ever? Do not be leaving me. Raymond need never know —"

Then it was that I killed her, as the hound, in great leaps, entered the pergola, dragging his chain in the moon-

light. One blow of the dagger, and she lay on my arm, white and innocent-looking as a sleeping child. The hound leaped for me, but the same dagger caught him in the throat. Another stroke left him twitching and quivering at my feet.

I stood between them, watching them long, to be sure no breath of life was there to come back.

Then I lifted her in my arms and bore her to the house. On straight through the rooms I went, where the masked dancers scattered with shrieks from my path. At last I saw Raymond, and carried her to him.

"I have found your wife," I said, and laid her in his arms.

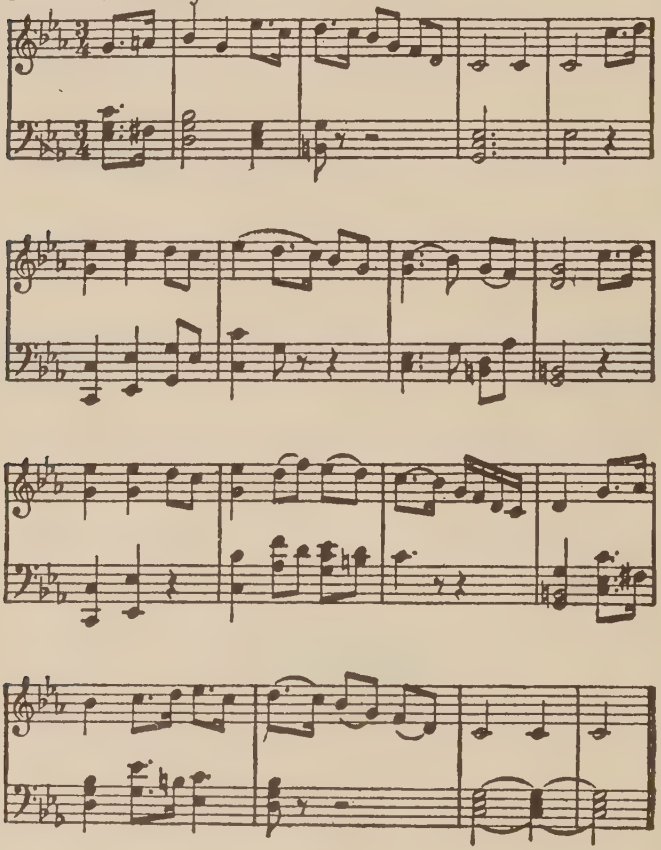
And for that, the judges, who cannot know, will be giving me death. FERGAL.

THE DARK ROSE

Roisin Dubh

(THE DARK ROSE)

Sixteenth Century.



THE DARK ROSE

. . . . . .
. . . . . .

ND gun-peal, and slogan cry
Wake many a glen serene,
Ere you shall fade, ere you shall die,
My Dark Rosaleen!
My Own Rosaleen!
The Judgment Hour must first be nigh,
Ere you can fade, ere you can die,
My Dark Rosaleen!

The lad Hugh scarce knew he was breathing the words, singing through his mind. Old Shamas Ronayne had been telling over the tale of Red Hugh O'Donnell, dead in Spain three hundred years ago, yet alive and youthful over all the land where his song of the dark rose was sung.

My Dark Rosaleen!
My Own Rosaleen!

"And he also had the name of Hugh on him. It's myself is wishful I could see a man like that in our own day—Shamas swears they don't make them any more."

He followed the sheep up through gorse and fern in the Kerry hills, and cut himself a rude flute of alder, and strove to catch the notes of the song on it, and tried again

softly whistling with a blade of grass held over his lips, and gave both up for the murmured words:

O my Dark Rosaleen!
Do not sigh, do not weep;
The ships are on the ocean green;
They march along the deep!

The drifting glory of the clouds, silver and luminous and softly gray, made wondrous forms and pictures against the blue of the sky, and the deeper, darker blue of the far sea. He drowsed there over the mystery of *Rosaleen*—had she been a maid beloved and estranged? Or, was she, indeed, a dear secret name for the shadowed land for which O'Donnell had fought and from which he was self-exiled?

The *suantre* of the sleepy winds lulled the lad into slumber before he decided the centuries-old mystery, but it remained with him in a misty dream, and in the dream he saw that the dark rose—the hidden rose—was a Leanan Sidhe, a fair mistress of the Secret People whose magic palaces were hidden under ancient raths of green, and where legendary heroes waited the mystic music of the awakening on Erinn's day of destiny.

There was, in this confused dreaming, more than a little of the tellings or the singings of old Shamas by the peat fire in the long twilights. A glen on the Kerry coast, where the sea-rovers of thirty centuries agone left records on the white strands, is a wonder-place for dreams. Queen Banva of the rath on Slieve Mish gave her name to the island in that place and was consort of King of the Forest in far-dim days when the forests were mighty and the great brown deer ran in countless herds and were gentled and gave milk only to the music of the voices of maidens—and the soothing and crooning and gentling harmonies of that music remain today, and is called the "music of

Fairie," and men wonder at the sweetness of it, and the living spirit of it.

The giant deer are gone, and the forests of wonder are gone — and the speech of that day was long forbidden — only the spirit of the music has lived in the hearts of the children of Banva.

SO the lad, Hugh, whose head was ever filled with one old legend, or another old song, merged crowned Banva the Fair, and a nameless fairy sweetheart, and the dark mystic rose-maid, immortalized by Mangan, into his dream there on the hillside in Kerry, and had grief that each was sad, for their tears were falling and his words of comfort were useless, and the music of the song came to his help, and he awoke himself with the whisper :

O my Dark Rosaleen!
Do not sigh — do not weep!

But it was not tears at all that were falling on his face and his hands: it was a swift, showery rain falling between two great blue and sunny plains of the sky — just one drifting cloud of rain from Slieve Mish, and it above him!

The sheep were over the hill and beyond, and guilt was on him as he ran after, pelted by the rain.

Through the gray mist of it he could see the patch of white they made on a sunny knoll toward which the shadow of the rain-cloud was moving.

But a nearer sound came to his ears through the swift drive of the shower — the bleat of a lamb, astray from a heartless parent. He stood in his tracks hearkening to it,

for it sounded from the druid rath above, and it was a queer place for the straying of a lamb up there among the bare stones when there was good grass, and that green, all below it.

But he ran across the old hill road and up the other side of it to where one hawthorn shone white in bloom at the summit.

It was a stiff run in the pelting rain, but the sounds were nearer each step. He crossed one circle of the long crumbled earth wall, then another, and plunged in between the standing stones and, breathless, dropped down on the stone paving with the rescued lamb in his arms.

He was guided to it more by sound than sight, for the shower was now a tempestuous gray wall of falling water, and with his treasure-trove he moved back under the shelter of roof formed by three enormous slabs. Once it might have been an underground temple, but the earth about it had washed away, and it was like nothing but a shadowy tunnel of great stone — and other great stone slabs fallen about.

He wiped the water from his eyes, peering out the way he had come, and then settled the lamb beside him and leaned back to wait the sunshine or the lessening of the downpour.

But he straightened quickly at what he saw in the shadow of the other wall, and the heart in him gave a great leap, for he had met one of his dreams, or a queen of a legend come alive again!

For a girl sat there in a greenish-gray dress, and touches of scarlet in the lining of the cloak over her shoulders. It was the cloak made the picture so complete in the ancientness of the suggestion — he could not know it was an idealized copy of a Connemara hooded cloak.

The two young things sat gazing at each other as if

entranced. The face of Hugh was white, yet not with fear. There was awe on him, but there was also joy, for, much as he had dreamed of the queens of beauty in old legends, not one dream held as much of charm as the uncrowned maid whose garb was so near the color of green lichen-covered stone that he feared she would fade back into the shadows of it.

Then she smiled in an adorable way.

"I saw you sleeping in the bracken as we passed up the old road," she said. "You looked like a picture of Shelley I have."

Hugh had not ever heard of that name, but there surely were many names in the old legends not known to Shamas, who was his one great historian.

"That is an Irish name, I think, but it is not mine," said the lad politely. "I am Hugh of the glen below, and I am thinking it is yourself would be Banva or Maeve but for the dark hair of you — and the dark brightness of the eyes of you."

"Maeve — Maeve?" she repeated and regarded him with twinkling humor. "Is it Queen Mab you mean — of the fairies?"

"It is — but she was a fair-haired woman, and nothing like you at all. I could not make guess at the name on you, yet it has the right to be a bright name, and beauty in it."

"You would not guess it ever, for it is no queen in a book," the girl said with a little ripple of laughter. "It is common as the bracken, and more common than the hawthorn in bloom there by the stone pillar, for it is Rose."

"Rose! the dark rose? Dark Rosaleen?" And the voice of Hugh was a whisper of awe. "I think now you are Maeve indeed, witching me with that name!"

"You are silly from tending sheep too much," said the

mocking beauty. "Why should a fairy witch you? And why should it be with my name? The dark rose! Am I then so dark? You are not polite as I thought you at first — and I wish the storm were over."

Hugh caught his breath in a real terror at thought of her anger.

"Ah, it is tricking me you are," he said, "for how would you not be knowing that the dark rose is the dearest flower growing to every one of the real Irish? Since Hugh O'Donnell was making that song away there in Spain, and since Mangan turned the verse of it to 'Rosaleen,' that rose is the sacred thing in many a breast. Shamas Ronayne was telling that to all of us boys, and he is wiser than most. I went asleep thinking of you, and singing the song, and — glory be to the name! — was it that was bringing you here to this far-away rath?"

"Thinking of *me* — and singing the song? Hugh of the glen, how could you think of a stranger you never saw or heard of? And what was the song? I said you looked like Shelley, the poet, and maybe it's a song you made yourself."

The color flooded his face at that, and she clapped her hands gleefully.

"It is — it is — it is!" she chanted, and smiled at his blushes.

"It is not then!" he denied awkwardly. "I have tried to find words for songs, and I did sing them to the sheep — as you maybe know," he added cautiously, "but how could a shepherd know all the man-thoughts of 'Rosaleen'? No, young, dark rose-lady, it was only one man made that — and the heart of him dying in him with the sickness for home. He had only thirty years of life, had Hugh O'Donnell, and Shamas was telling us that the poets of Ireland die in youth for the reason that the People of the Hidden

Raths want verses and music under the green hills, and they call the young away while their dreams are on them."

"You are a very queer boy," she said, "and I won't believe there was a song of any rose until I hear it."

He looked at her doubtfully.

"You may be having the Gaelic?" he ventured, but she shook her dark-ringleted head. In his heart he thought she was but trying him, and probably knew all the tongues of all the lands of the earth.

"Then I'll be giving you the Englishing Mangan made of it; but the words will not sing themselves to the Irish air O'Donnell made; but that is right enough, too, when you think of it. Second-best music is good enough for the English who smashed the Irish harps, and this is a verse of it. There are many verses to 'The Dark Rose.'"

And with the lamb snuggling under his arm and the slanting rain making a gray veil of all the outer world, Hugh threw back his head, unconscious of lack of training as a meadow lark, and sang—

I could scale the blue air,
I could plow the high hills;
Oh! I could kneel all night in prayer
To heal your many ills!
And one beamy smile from you
Would float like light between
My toils and me, my own, my true,
My Dark Rosaleen!
My Own Rosaleen!
Would give me life and soul anew,
A second life, a soul anew,
My Dark Rosaleen!

The girl leaned forward, watching him, as startled at the unboyish song as he had been at sight of her.

"That is a song I never heard," she said, "and it is a lovely one; but what does he mean by 'a second life'?"

"I never heard anyone asking that," said the lad, wrinkling his brows. "I will be the one to ask Shamas of it, for I heard him say there was no line of that song without a meaning to it."

"Who is Shamas?"

"Sometimes he is a tinker, and he has made more than one circle of Ireland in his time. He was the one to be teaching us 'The Dark Rose,' and telling us of the poets of the ancient old days when a poet was highest man in a kingdom, and no gifts too great for him — I'm thinking that was even before Padrig was coming over with the bells. I'm wishing you had the Gaelic. Shamas has poems by the hundred, from the songs of Dierdre, and Liadan (whose home was right here in Kerry itself) — down to the March of Brian, and the Coulin, which he is singing at me often enough — and him laughing! But it is in Gaelic all the words of them are, and no English words fit the music at all. I'm thinking you should have the Gaelic, Dark Rose."

"I wonder if I should? My nurse knew Gaelic, but they laughed at her songs until she grew silent, and then they told me she died. I was little then."

She sat thinking a moment, humming softly in a gentle croon and moving her head to keep time to the melody while the eyes of Hugh grew bright.

"You do know it, you do!" he said joyously, but she shook her head.

"No — the words will not come, though once I did know that sleepy-time song of Kathleen, but all I can remember is —

Sho heen sho lo, O lulla lo!"

"But you have the memory of the ancient music, and it is old beyond count! Also there are English words put

to that one, and I hearing a girl back from America singing it — and this is the English of it:

I've found my laughing babe a nest
On Slumber Tree.
I'll rock you there to rosy rest,
Asthore Machree!
Oh lulla lo, sing all the leaves
On Slumber Tree!
Till ev'rything that hurts or grieves
Afar must flee."

The girl sat looking at him, and the tears were bright in her eyes.

"That is it — that is the song of poor old Kathleen. To think I would hear it in this cave on a Kerry hill."

"And why not? This is not a cave, but a druid's temple where they tell that the new fire was given out to the people at Samhain, and the druids had the making of that fire on an altar here and the giving of it. But children and mothers and their *suantre* songs were before that time surely, and many a one could have been crooned in this place, for great gatherings were here. Even the old people are liking to hear the music of the slumbersongs. They say it brings back the voices of mothers — here."

He touched his breast, and had a smile, gentle and deprecating lest she should think it childish indeed that old folks should care for lullabies, but she was gazing at him curiously.

"You strange boy!" she said, and laid her slim hand on her own breast. "I never knew anyone like you; you made me hurt — here — when you said that! You make me want to cry — yet there is not a word in the song for crying! I think I have a hundred cousins, but none of them knows the things you know; yet, one time we were Irish, too."

He smiled at her mysteriously.

"To be sure you are, else how could you be the Dark Rose and come to this fairy rath of the hawthorn tree? It is 'fairie' they are naming in these days the great mystic people of old in Ireland, and great and good they were and are, in spite of saints, bells, and banning. (May they hear me say it!) Shamas says Irish blood must ever waken to send back its answer to Irish music — and that is what it was doing when you said it hurt you: it is my thought that it was only calling you awake."

"You strange shepherd and wonderful boy," she said, and her voice was so full of sweetness and kinship that he leaned forward and looked, slightly smiling, yet very earnest, into her eyes.

"Tell me — Dark Rose — have you been wandering away and only now found your way back? Or have you gone far out on some tide of forgetting, or of slumber, maybe — and the lullaby and the heart-song of the Dark Rose is calling you awake?"

"Are you a wizard in shape of a boy that you know even my thoughts?" she asked. "For I was thinking that song of Kathleen must have been sleeping in my mind a long time — a very long time, and all of the words gone. Yet the music did wait to be called awake, and it was you called."

"I think it was Maeve and Banva calling, and both of them queens calling to you! But you are awake again — and you are surely the Dark Rose living again!"

"I wish my cousins could hear you call me that," she said, and laughed; "they would think it a new sort of compliment. When they want to praise, they say a girl is fair and not dark, and they never heard the song."

"It may be that the sleep is on them, too, and it may be

you will call them awake. I am thinking there will be many to answer a call when you cry it."

A rainbow shimmered through the mist, and a curious radiance heralded the breaking of sunrays between the clouds. The storm ended quickly as it began, and Hugh rose to his feet with the lamb content on his arm. The raindrops still shone on his gold-brown curls, and the time had been short in the strange shelter, yet he did not feel as if it had been: all the generations since O'Donnell made the song seemed to have been bridged over by the dark, bright beauty of that strange girl in the gray shadow.

She also arose, but did not emerge; her eyes were on him, slender and at ease in his homely garb of homespun, weather-stained and worn. The sun touched his hair into a shimmer of radiance and the white of the lamb was made whiter by the arrows of the sun now far down the west. She could not but note a certain patrician cast to his features, and the slender shapeliness of the hand holding the lamb, and she saw him as a picture in whatever light he moved, first Shelley, and now—

"Shepherd Hugh of the glen, you would have given me a fine fright, rushing in here after me, had you been anyone else than yourself," she said, "yet I know not a thing of you for all our talk. I am sure you are a poet, and if there were Irish princes left in Ireland, I would know you were one of them, but after all I only know your name is Hugh, and that you have a friend, Shamas, a tinker."

"And I am only knowing that you are the Dark Rose, and that the fairies brought you here on eve of Beltain that I might see you once and be content: my great thanks and my love to them—may they hear me say it!"

"Content?" she murmured—"not even asking who I might be?"

"Not even asking," he said, smiling back to her. "I

care not a rush the name others may be putting on you. Queen of fairies, or maid of the cinders, they may be calling you, but the Dark Rose are you to me!"

"There may be a day when I come again to Kerry," she said. "Would I find you if I asked for Hugh of a glen?"

"I am foster brother to Michal Donn, and his shieling is back of beyond on the other side there. I am of the Siod."

"Siod?" and she stared at him; "Sidhe, I read that in tales of fairies — it is their name! I do not need to be Irish to know that. I thought you were not mortal!"

"And I knew you could not be," he retorted in her own mood. "If you are again on this hill of Kerry, I will be telling you the tale of that Siod clan. There was a woman who came out of the mists long ago, as you have, and left thought and mind on a mortal clan. It is told around the peat fires at fall of night, but they speak of other things when I join their circle."

"Was she also a flower?"

"No — she was born of the sea, and the name put on her was Moruadh (sea-maid), and it became, in time, Maurya. A prince of the Children of the Sea took her for wife and was banned for it by the druids — and that was even before Padrig was brought captive slave from Gaul."

"A prince of the Children of the Sea?"

"Munster clans of the west are called that, for their fathers came over the sea from some lost land — yes, that is what has been told of them always."

"I am coming back some day, Hugh of the Fairies," she said.

A long signal call came to them. His eyes met hers in question. She nodded her head.

"They are far away yet," she said, and she seemed reluctant enough at the sound. "So you are of the sons of Irish princes, yet you herd sheep on the Kerry hills?"

"So do others whose genealogies reach to the generations when the Son of Mary was born; true that is, though many would be doubting it. Some souls are born for palaces and walls and roofs — others for the surge of the sea and stout decks — and others to feel ever the springing grass under foot. I am of that last, and Shamas was telling my father never to house me, or break my reed pipe until I had reached height and made my own choice; and I have yet some growing to do."

"And what will you be then: herder of sheep?"

"I think I will just be playing the pipe to the sheep and singing old songs until you are coming again."

"To the fairies' rath?"

"I think it will be in the fairies' rath."

She broke a spray of the hawthorn bloom, and stood looking at him.

"It has been very wonderful," she mused. "I will not believe any of it when I wake tomorrow, but I will take a bit of the hawthorn for proof. If — if I come back to these hills I will send you a message of hawthorn, and you will come again and tell me of Ireland's music and her poets — perhaps you will then have poems of your own."

"I am the one would be thankful if that could be," he said.

Voices were heard on the wind, and the bark of a dog. The sun was touching the very edge of the far sea.

"Do not move from that pillar, and you will be out of their sight," she said. "I will give them a fright to think I was alone in this waste place. I will tell them a fairy prince was my host: they will never believe me, but I know it is true."

She broke the spray of hawthorn in two parts.

"Why did the tinker laugh at you when he sang the song of the coulin — and what is that? Is it another mystery?"

"It is not. It is the ancient Irish way for men to wear the hair, long and tied back. Under the old English laws men were punished for keeping that old custom or using Irish speech. It is me he is laughing at, and telling me I'll be sent to the Castle yet in punishment for my long hair."

"It makes you look like old pictures," she said, "and surely a boy can do that much as he pleases in these days. This is your hawthorn to prove I was here and had shelter with you. What is the name of this place?"

"It is Templard — the high temple — and should be sung in a song because the Dark Rose has stood under the hawthorn shade in this place," he said, and she laughed silently at that.

"How they would joy to hear me called dark anything," she said.

The voices were nearer, and one man's voice calling, "Rose! Rosa! Rosalie!"

"It is one of the hundred cousins," she laughed. "You will see, Hugh of the Siod, that they call my name in many ways, but only you have called me Rose the Dark. Fare you well, shepherd boy, until you make music to call me back to Kerry."

"I will be making that music," he said.

She let fall the spray of hawthorn lightly on the white lamb in his arms just as a dark hound halted on the summit of the earth wall; she ran to meet him, poised there like a green bird with scarlet wings as her cloak blew back in the wind.

There were shouts, a clamor of voices, and then the one voice.

"Rose! You here safe, and the peasants searching the bogs for you!"

"Whist!" she called down to them mockingly, "this is no place for your shouting and your hounds. I have been

spending an hour with the fairies in their rath of Templard, and the rest of you are not to put foot in it. Not at all after the sun is down," and she pointed to the ball of celestial fire sinking beyond oceans—"the mystic hour is past."

Then she darted down, laughing, and only the hawthorn spray was left to show she had not been a vision, laughing, mocking, weeping, adorable in young beauty.

Once Hugh caught sight of her again. A carriage with black horses waited on the old road used by the peat-cutters of the bog beyond. Toward it she walked with a tall man and the hound between them. A half-dozen men and boys followed through the whins and rocky pasture —they did not look back, and he knew fear was on them for all her mocking; and no maid or man of the glen would choose the ruins of Templard for a resting place at setting of sun on any day.

She halted once on a velvet-green knoll and for a few heartbeats she stood—a flash of crimson against the deep purple of the sky. She did not look back, but with upflung hand made a gesture of hail and farewell, and Hugh smiled at that, and waved in return though he knew she would not see.

IT was late twilight when he brought down the sheep to the fold, and Molly Donn, his foster sister, put before him a brown loaf baked in the hearth oven, the pitcher of new milk, and boiled potatoes, while a white-haired little old man puffed at his pipe and looked him over.

"You ranged the ewes over far when you took them to the rath of Templard," he remarked, and Molly rested the needles in her knitting to stare at him.

"Shamas man, have you indeed 'the sight' that you look over all the pasture range — and you not beyond the boolie this day?" she asked, and the old man with the grave mouth, and merry blue eyes, puffed his pipe and chuckled.

"Have thought with you, Molly girl," he suggested. "What need of the second sight, when he sports a twig of hawthorn flower from the fairy rath on that hill? That hawthorn is ever the first to be blooming."

"You have sharper eyes than the youth about you, Father Shamas," said Hugh, and laughed at the fear in the eyes of Molly. "I was in truth on that hill, and fell asleep and dreaming in the bracken until the rain fell — that was when the sheep strayed a bit, but all are safe home again."

Molly made the sign to ward off evil, and looked her horror at him.

"Asleep in the bracken of Templard and this on the eve of Beltain!" she whispered. "Saint Bride to your saving! Fear would be on me over the dreams of Templard."

"Save your fears, Molly asthore. The dream was a beautiful dream, and I am the richer."

Old Shamas regarded the glowing eyes of the lad. "The dreams of the young are seed for the harvest of old age," he said. "It is good to dream in beauty, else the old days will be gray days."

"It's only guessing at that you are, Shamas," retorted Hugh, "for there is no age on you — nor will ever be."

The old man and the lad looked in each other's eyes with the smiling content of comradeship, but Molly, turning the

heel of the hose, did not see the look, and was slow in imagination for a Kerry coast woman.

"It's glib you are growing with the tongue, Hugh, lad," she admonished him. "I was never daring to cross my elders, nor was Michal at your age. When your father is coming back, or sending for you for the schooling, he will be putting blame on us for the bold words of you — and God and Mary know it is no fault of mine!"

"True for you," laughed Hugh, "it is not — Shamas is the one to blame."

Michal came in at that, shaking the water from his coat-amore, for the rain was again falling.

"Lucky it is it held off so long," he said, "for the hunt was up for a bit of a girl straying on the mountain, and lost from the old castle."

"What is witching you?" demanded Molly. "You know well the castle of Argial is a forsaken place."

"It has been, but the new heir, Hector Laud, must be giving it an overlooking, and brought along friends for gay doings."

"Fine it would be to have a new and young lord of Argial again — that has never been known in our time," mused Molly.

"This one is new but not young; Denis and Tim Doherty saw him. He is a pale, masterful kind of man, and proud at that. They say it will be a great wonder if he gets the girl he is wanting as mistress of Argial, for she has lightning in her blood, and the devil's share of courage. Well, Time tells the story! That girl it was started the hunt, and Tim was after getting two shillings for taking his gray pony and going the bog boreen in the search. No, he was not the one to find her. She was found, and he earned the two shillings in ease and comfort."

"Who was the lost one?" asked Shamas, for Hugh made no question.

"It was the daughter of a Maurice, and she English, and knowing not a path of all Kerry."

"Maurice is not a name of England," mused Shamas, "not at all of England."

"Well — God knows! That is their saying, and she has only her beauty for wealth and her uncle keen on the match when the time comes. She's only a bit of a slip yet, and time in plenty ahead! Denis was fair enchanted by a glimpse of her behind the black horses of Argial, and them galloping to put fear on a soul! His saying was that the cuckoo would sing in falling snow for that daughter of Maurice, whoever she may be."

Molly on the creepie by the hearthstone clicked her knitting needles, and glanced her impatience at Michal, busy with his supper.

"That would be the man of it," she said in disdain of masculine weaknesses. "Every man-jack of them agog over a bright eye, and never a knowledgeable word from you of where the child was lost, and who had the finding of her."

"Ah, blather of you, Molly! That's the woman of it — wanting to know the ins and outs of all things going. Give me another mug of milk, girl! No one was finding the stray at all. She walked out from Templard when she got ready, and no fear on her and not a hair of her head wet! She had mocking and laughter for Laud of Argial and told of a King of the Fairies who made music for her in the ruins, but Argial had blackness of thunder in his looks and drove like the devil down from the mountain."

"Glory be to God!" breathed Molly, crossing herself. "A slip of a girl like that to venture in Templard this day!

Hugh, lad, when the sheep were straying over there beyond did you get sight of her?"

But Hugh was sprawled on the hearth with a bit of paper and pencil. He was tousling his curls for straying thoughts, and making scribbles there by the glow of the peat fire. Molly repeated her question before he gave heed to it.

"I saw no daughter of a Maurice there, and no bride of Argial," he said stolidly. "What I saw on Templard was a different thing. Did I not tell you I fell asleep in the bracken and had a dream? Whist, Molly dear, and let be, for I heard music there and am making a song of it."

"Oh, Shamas man," begged Molly. "Say something for me to put the fear of God on that lad! You know well it is ill luck to sleep on a fairies' rath, and ill luck to make songs to their harping, and worst luck of all for a maid or man to follow fairy king, or fairy mistress, to a rath on a Midsummer Eve, or on this eve of Beltain. Tell it to him, Shamas, for — Bride and Mary to our helping! — it is only to you he will hearken."

AND in the old Kerry castle of Argial, a dark old man, in an invalid's chair, frowned at the girl called by Hugh the Dark Rose, and all the laughter and joy were gone from her face.

"I will not have you mock your host and my friend!" he said, and his clenched hand fell on the tea-table and set the china and silver a-tinkle. "I will not have it from you! Gerald and you have bread and comfort under his

roof — and that is more than I can give you; and bread alone is more than I may have at the last — with stocks going smash, and no hope of retrieving losses, I will not have this rebellion and mockery of yours!"

The girl looked from his angry eyes to the brandy and soda on the tea-table.

"I meant to ask you about that, about the little inheritance of Jerry's and mine — if — it is gone — ?"

"Of course it's gone — gone long ago — with my own! I tell you there is only one way of school and comfort for both of you."

"But, uncle," the girl went over and stood back of his chair as if speech were less hard if his eyes were not on her; "Jerry and I have endless numbers of cousins somewhere here in Ireland — "

"All poorer than church mice; and the ones with means have all gone to America or the continent. Sensible enough they are, too!"

"Yet there might be some left who would let us make a home with them — even a home on a farm would not be bad. We are not quite paupers; surely, we have a little left, and I would work — do anything — "

His laugh with a deal of scorn in it, halted her.

"Do anything! Then do the only sensible thing there is to do. Settle your mind to be civil and be mistress of Argial when the time comes. Hector is enough of a connection of the family to accept favors from. Gerald will be provided for; he will get his bit to secure a commission, and he would think you a fool to talk of work — and perhaps a clerk's grind for him! Why, it is a dower for a princess Hector Laud is offering for you — and you talk of a group of unknown Irish cousins, poverty-stricken as yourself! It is too absurd for words. Don't let me hear any more of it."

There was silence for so long a time that the man in the chair grew restless and turned half around; his voice was more conciliating.

"Be a good girl now! You must know you are the only hope left. Hector adores you, and your mockery is serious to him. You are too young to know what is best. Why start a fool's hunt for Irish cousins you never saw when an English cousin offers you the key to his treasure chests?"

"I care little enough for the treasure chests — though I do love the Kerry hills," she said at last.

"Well, that's something! You can have all of them you want when married, but not a foot shall you go alone on them again while we are in the castle. And that will only be until tomorrow. You will go back to school until common sense has ended your flighty rebellion. It is a choice between starvation and the income of a girl-queen. Poverty is an enemy to fight against — it will conquer you in the end!"

"It may overpower me when I think of Jerry and his future," she said quietly, "but to be overpowered does not mean to be conquered."

IN an early April a woman rode down the boreen of the glen from Templard, and her eyes rested often on the simple growths — from cress of the brook to the buds on the prickly thorn. She reached out and touched the green ivy in the dusky wood, and pinned a bit of it on her coat of darker green.

Molly Donn, catching glimpse of her through the open

door, flew hurriedly to combing her hair with one hand, and pushing Shamas toward the door with the other.

"Go on now — it is herself! Have manners and give her greeting whilst I make myself tidy. God save her! No word of anyone has overpraised her!"

Shamas, a little older, a little whiter, did as bidden, and looked his wonder when the rider spoke.

"You are Shamas? Are you not?" she asked, and her dark eyes had searching kindness.

"It is Shamas, indeed, I am called, my lady," he made answer, "though there is many another of the same name on the Kerry coast, and I've no monopoly."

"There can be only one here at the foot of Templard," she said, "one with —

> The ever young blue eyes,
> Beneath the thatch of snow."

"Ah then, you've been seeing the lad's bits of verse, and songs of the Kerry hills," he said; and the old face was illumined. "Sure enough he did not forget his old friends — not even a pet cow or a sheep! Why, I find myself giving looks to the bog-berries and the bracken under foot as never before — and all because he bore them in his mind and put them in his songs across the sea beyond."

"Yes — I've been seeing the songs — and hearing them. My brother is home from the front and tells me they are sung in the trenches by the soldiers. He is not well enough to ride, so I have come alone. I thought you would perhaps tell me a little about the boy who wrote the 'Legends of Desmond.'"

Molly appeared at that moment, eager and voluble with offered hospitality.

"Who could tell you if not Shamas Ronayne?" she

asked. "Didn't he teach the lad them old tales and songs of old battles? — Indeed, he did then, and it's proud we are of Hugh, and joyful that his heart has remembrance for the glen folk. It's proud, too, we are that the lady of Castle Argial has his name among the many who would crave remembrance of her — and will you please to come within, for a rest on the way?"

The lady of Argial dismounted, and looked with interest at the low room, stone-floored, and the walls brown with peat smoke. The simple furnishings were clean, but the bareness of it all seemed to appall the visitor.

"And this was the cradle!" she said at last, and looked at Shamas, as to one who would understand. "Tell me of him."

"It is not much to tell," said the old man. "He was ailing as a young lad, and was left behind when his father sailed for the western world. The grass under his feet here was the right cure for him. Ere the day came when his father struck the rich luck of mines and such wealth as is to be had for the looking over there, the lad Hugh had a mind full of tales of old Munster — and more than the tales, for he had the feel of the land and could sing it — yes, he could do that! When tutors and the learning of books were coming his way, he made that learning serve for telling the old tales in a new manner and saving the old songs in print, so cheaply that even the husband of a one-donkey farm could afford the price of it. Many wise men were making record of old Irish for the scholars and the learned — that is what he is saying, but the thing he was wishful for ever was to make it easy for the lad of the cow-path — and the digger of peat — and the herring fishers along the shore. Yes, that was the wish of him."

"He has his wish," she said. "Hugh Siod is a name well loved by many."

"Aye, and hated as well," murmured Shamas. "You're not the first to ride this path asking of him; the sergeant of constabulary has gathered in more than one copy, and others are hid as the history of Keating was hid for generations among the Irish. My own is under the hearth."

"Whist man," muttered Molly, who was setting the black kettle on the hob for making of tea, "why bury a crock of coin only to lift the cover off for the passer-by?"

But Shamas smiled at the visitor, and lifted the stone-flagging where a flat package reposed in the excavation beneath.

"Let be, Molly," he said tolerantly, "the lady of Argial has blood in her of the nobles who had banishment — 'to hell or Connaught' put upon them by the invader. The daughter of Maurice could not be an informer against her own."

"She could not," said the lady of Argial. "My grandfather was killed for Ireland — and my father went into exile to escape the same enemies. I am only learning these things now, for it was long kept hidden from us."

"Aye! That is often the way of it," agreed Shamas. "The young in free lands could not have understanding of it, and what use to put shadow on them? Look at this now" — and he opened the package and turned the leaves of the little volume to a tale, *The Wife of Desmond*. "There now is a lament, second to none ever written: not Dierdre for her lover — not Nuala in her exile, ever had the heart wail for hearts' losses equaled by the Irish bride of Desmond at the slaughter of her infant sons and their father, who had dared Saxon laws to marry in honor an Irish maid!"

"That was a true tale, and a terrible," agreed Molly, who was at the open door watching the path, "but fear goes with it, and what profit in the printed words of such,

when troubles might come to all of us for the very sight of it here?"

"It teaches the young from songs what they never would glimpse from the books of historians," said their visitor. "I had taunts given me in schools that my people were of jails, and exiles. I carried the shadow of that in silence all my youth. This book told me they were not criminals — they were patriots — and my pride in them now is beyond word. Think of that! — I — who scarcely dared speak the name of them all my life!"

"And you a grand lady, too!" breathed Molly in amaze. "And it is noble I am sure your forbears were, and not to be spoke of by the likes of me who has no reading of books to my knowledge. But indeed now there have been no bad killings this while back, and it is a good herring year, and the new litter of pigs gives us promise of comfort for the winter, to say nothing of the nest-egg Hugh himself has been sending me! No, my lady, it is myself is glad enough to hear speech of these things, for Shamas here, and Michal, who is gone to the harbor, give me no light on it at all; but when a good year is with us why put in time with reading of the old-time slaughterings?"

"To justify our fathers who sacrificed themselves for freedom. It is a wonderful word — freedom! The pity is that few value it until after it has been lost."

There was weariness in the sweet, deep voice, and a moment of shadow in the dark eyes, and the old man nodded his head slowly.

"It came your way early," he said, "but it has been bringing understanding with it."

"No," she said lowly, "this little book brought the understanding. I owe much to it; I drifted in discontent from port to port until it found me! I bought a hundred copies for my brother who is afire with hope these days.

Surely, our Irish regiments, fighting abroad, must win us justice at last here at home!"

"A blessing on the day!" said Shamas. "It is a proud time for us, Lady Argial, that your heart is with the cottagers here in Kerry. There's many an Irish estate give over to cattle and keepers and mayhaps some gentleman for the fall hunting, and no spirit of life in it at all, and it kills the land, that does. It kills the spirit of a land — or — drives it too far afield to find the way back again!"

"Wouldn't himself be proud to see you here now, drinking tea from his own cup, and with the book of his writing to your hand?" said Molly, beaming hospitality — and settling herself on the doorstep with her own cup of tea after presenting her visitor with a gilded guest cup. "Now wouldn't it be a proud day the day he would see you so?"

"I did see him once; it seems very long ago. He was a slender young lad with a wonderful smile and odd sayings. He sang a song on the mountain — a song of Ireland — it had charm and mysteries in it. That was years ago."

"And the song was *Kathleen na Hulihan?*" ventured Shamas. "He ever was singing or whistling one of them, and there have been many."

"No," said Lady Argial, with the book open at *A Legend of the Dark Rose* — "no — it was a different song. But my brother has a new song of Kathleen and he says the boys are singing it in camp. He found it in an American paper, but the poet's name I could not learn. I think the writer of this book would love it, though it is the sad song of an old man."

"I am wondering if you would let us have it?" asked Shamas. "Not so many new songs come up the glen —

it would be a favor of grace, if it would not be asking too much?"

"How could you ask too much? You who taught a bird its song here in the Kerry hills," she said, and the flush of pleasure mounted to the white thatch of his hair. She finished the tea and sat looking over the far green.

"I do not sing, but I can repeat three of the verses :

O Kathleen na Hulihan,
It's old I am and gray,
The autumn leaves they drift around
The ending of my day.
The red leaves — the dead leaves —
They drift about my way,
Kathleen na Hulihan, today!

O Kathleen na Hulihan,
I wandered far from you.
I took a woman to my wife
And kind she was and true,
But your gray eyes looked out on me
Within her eyes of blue;
And, Kathleen na Hulihan,
My soul went after you!

O Kathleen na Hulihan,
Your face is like a star!
Your face has led me to your feet,
Through wastes and waters far!
Your face has made a day for me
Where only twilights are!
O Kathleen na Hulihan, my star!"

There was silence for a little when she ended and Shamas looked at her with a glint of tears in his eyes.

"My star!" he said, nodding gently, "a star indeed — and a poet of another land knowing it and singing it! This is a day to live for — a day of great comfort, and you bring-

ing it to me! Now, Molly, woman, you'll have no more moments of fear for Hugh, and the tales he has retold, when that telling has brought the lady of Argial here to a shepherd's cot, and her bringing a new Kathleen to us — a star indeed — a star indeed!"

"It is myself is proud as any of Hugh," said the cautious Molly. "But the boys are wild over him, and many a poet of Ireland has died in exile for less than he has dared say — and you know that well, Shamas, and this is a time of fear at the best, and you are knowing that, too!"

Lady Argial was reading the kindly, yet careful, inscription in the book from under the hearth.

"And this is his own writing to you — others will envy you his love written there. Tell me if there is anything in which he needs help."

"Nothing we can know — not wealth surely, for the father has left him enough and to spare. Every penny the book brings goes to a fund for Ireland — and more besides!"

"I did not know that — there was no one to tell me," she said, rising. "It was a fancy I had that he was maybe poor and alone. But perhaps he is not alone either?"

"He is alone except for Dark Rosaleen, or Kathleen na Hulihan," said Shamas, "and I think he will be having no other sweetheart."

Their visitor stood in the doorway and looked back into the dusky room of the one window, and then to the almost frail little old man whose spirit was not at all frail.

She clasped hands with him, and with Molly Donn, and mounted the black horse from the stone wall at the stile.

"I do not mean that Argial shall be merely a hunting lodge ever again," she said. "Come to me as a friend if ever there is favor or justice you have to ask."

On the hill above she halted to look back and wave her hand.

"Like a queen on a throne she looks there!" said Molly all a-flutter, "and like a queen, too, she sat, simple as the likes of us — on a seat here under our own eaves! Shamas, dear, did you ever hope to see the day?"

But Shamas did not answer. His eyes were on the dark horse and its rider outlined against the shining glory of gold-and-primrose clouds behind which the sun was passing in partial eclipse.

She looked like a statue there, for horse and rider were flat, dark outlines against the sky — themselves in passing shadow and the radiance beyond.

But it was not the picture by which the old man was held — it was a sudden forward movement of hers as if peering down the sea road at something not discernible by the two watchers of the cottage. The horse moved and half turned, restless and eager to be gone, but she halted him there — waiting.

Then the cart of Michal came over the brow of the hill, and a tall man beside Michal lifted his cap in recognition, and the woman, leaning forward, waved her hand.

"Glory be!" muttered Molly. "And who would be the stranger there with Michal?"

But old Shamas knew!

"It's himself," he said, and his voice trembled. "I can go the Way in content now that my eyes are on him again — it's himself come back to us!"

The stranger leaped from the cart and strode over the upland green where the woman waited. His cap was in his hand, and the shock of bronze-gold curls were gone; one lock over his forehead was the only reminder of the golden crown she had remembered.

"O Fairy Prince of a holiday!" she said, and smiled in quick appraisement.

"O Dark Rose of a dream!" he answered, and bowed before her. "This is a more wonderful coming back than I could have hoped — it has taken ten years to earn it!"

He apparently did not note her half-extended hand, but stood as a courtier might before a queen, yet with a sort of gay comradeship in his smile, and the caress in his voice. The horse reached forward with pointed ears of inquiry, and then snuggled its nose against his shoulder. He lifted his hand and stroked the black satiny skin.

"It is a fine welcome to Kerry he is giving me," he said, with laughing touch of brogue. "Ah! It's great just to be breathing the air again!"

"A welcome to Kerry is what we all give you, Hugh Siod," she said. "You forgot to pipe to the herds here until I came again, but you kept well your boy-promise to make songs for Ireland!"

"For the Dark Rose," he corrected her, and smiled. "I think I promised to make them on the fairies' rath, but we human things drift in strange currents sometimes, and my songs were made in another place."

"They go to my heart," she said, "and not mine alone. My brother idolizes you; I must tell you of Jerry and his comrades. Your songs have been an inspiration."

He stood while she told him of the wounded brother, and the hopes for Ireland founded on the Irish troops, drilled to fight, if need be, their ancient enemy for equal rights, yet putting aside, temporarily, their own great cause, and marching to battle beside that enemy when devastation threatened a larger world.

The glint of laughter went out of his eyes as they talked there — and they talked long.

She grew pale and still as he told her of things beyond

the seas, of foreign alliance by which all Ireland could be made a battlefield, of the political groups who stayed at home to undo the work of the Irish regiments in which her pride was so great.

"For that I have come — and come in secret," he confessed. "Because of what I have written in my passion for Irish freedom, strange things have been told to me. All my heart is with them — but this is not the time! I have crossed the ocean to tell them that, and to bring word from men more important than I. I go to Cork and then to Dublin to do what I may."

"And then?"

"I have been helping recruit in Canada, but others can carry on that work now. If I escape alive from my Irish friends when I tell them the truths I bring — well — if there is room for me in an Irish regiment, that is where I will be. There is yet work to do."

Her hand crept up to her throat as she listened to him.

"Once you made me weep when you crooned a lullaby," she said, "and now, for all my gladness and pride in your work, you are giving me a great fear! You make me understand things that were dark. I fear — I fear my brother may know of that group you came to reason with, I fear it greatly! And — you maybe know the position and inclinations of Lord Argial — "

"I know," he said quietly, "yours will not be the only family divided in Ireland — there will be tragedies as dark as any I have sung, and the day is past when they can be hidden as of old."

"You know the censor has suppressed your *Legends of Desmond*?"

"I ought to," and his smile twinkled out again. "But sailors sing the songs of them aboard ship, and teach them to sweethearts ashore, and I heard a shepherd whistling

one of them as we crossed over the plain below — so — one way and another they will bear their message, if it is worth the bearing!"

"It is — it is!" she said earnestly. "You have wakened many of us to greater pride in our heritage. I am only one of them. Did you know — have you ever chanced on the trace of a link between your family and our own? My brother found it in some old record of genealogy of Munster. I — he takes great pride in it. I — am able to claim myself as your kinswoman — though far removed."

"Not so far!" he corrected. "You may remember that I recognized you as kindred even when awed by you, and O'Donnell's Dark Rose was called by him 'The Flower of Munster.'"

She looked at him as he spoke lightly of the things of which he had written as a religion.

"I have found many of my Irish cousins in the ten years," she said, "but not one of them is like you. I rode up to Templard today, but all is different; there is no hawthorn blooming and no white lamb, and no shepherd of songs!"

"I never went there again," he said very quietly. "It is a place to dream about. When I have done something of use to Ireland — of real use — I will go up again to the old temple. It has always been sanctuary to me. I would wish that the hawthorn might be in bloom when I go again — and that I might see you there!"

She had the same wish, and he knew it without words. The childish promise of tryst when his songs called her back to Kerry was not forgotten by either of them. Ten years of life in the world had dragged their long days between a lad and a maid whose hands had not even touched, yet nothing in that life had been more real than their dreams of each other.

"I must go," she said. "It is wonderful that you returned here today — the day I came just to look at the place where you had once lived! I wonder if I will ever see you again, Hugh Siod."

"I think you will," he said; "wherever they send me I will find my way back some time. You wear the green — dear color of hope, which is all that is left to Ireland! Hope then with me that the hawthorn may be in bloom when I do come — hawthorn time is the glad time, and the winter left behind."

"I will — I will!" she said.

They looked at each other steadily and turned away. He halted once to watch her riding swiftly up toward the far summit, and then he followed Michal to the cottage.

"Would you look at that now?" demanded Molly watching afar, "not even a handshake did she give him — and she all fine words here in praise of his writings! Sure, the quality folk is a puzzle any way you take them, and it would hurt her none at all to be human to him as she was to us!"

THE stars were out when the lady of Argial rode along the great oak avenue from the forest, and had joy in the night odors of swelling buds, and the promise of earth that winter was indeed gone.

A leaping light against the windows told that a cheery fire had been made, more for the brightness of it than the need of warmth. And she thought of the long talk there she would have with Jerry over the strange hour at Siod's old Kerry home.

But when she reached the hall, angry voices came to her ears, and she faced a strange scene from the library door.

Jerry, on his crutch, stood, a picture of helpless fury, and watched Hector Laud of Argial tear leaf by leaf a book apart, and toss them on the blaze.

"I will have no smuggled seditious books under my roof," he declared, "and no plotting traitors!"

"You are the sort of man to make traitors!" said Jerry hotly. "You are the sort of man against whom people rise in ever-widening circles until it is called Revolution! Can you put lock and key on thoughts by burning a thinker's books? I will not stop another night under your damned roof if I have to hobble on crutches over the mountain!"

"Jerry!" She was beside him, with her arms about him — and staring hard at Laud, who calmly continued his task instead of flinging the volume at once to the flames.

"Rose, Rose! It is the songs of Siod! My songs! It is brutal," muttered Jerry, and before either realized what she was doing she darted forward and tore the remnants of the volume from the grasp of her husband.

"They are Ireland itself, the very spirit of Ireland! And no fire ever made by you — or made by your blood — can burn that spirit out, Hector Laud!" she said.

The men were no more astonished than herself at her act. Laud stared at her, sneering, incredulous.

"Irish bombast!" he remarked. "So my wife is also a reader of this forbidden drivel of old legends! It is as well I came unexpectedly to note what was holding you so long in the wilds of Kerry. Is my castle one of the several used in these days for traitorous sedition?"

"Our blood breeds no traitors," she replied evenly, "neither do we permit insult. Jerry is right. You can

have your roof for your own usage. A thatched cottage will give us more of self-respect."

"Don't be absurd!" suggested Laud. "You know perfectly well I won't allow you to go, and will not have a scandal. That thing in your hand is smuggled literature of a pernicious sort. If I choose I could put your brother under arrest for having it here. Burning it is the simple way out."

"Legally, I suppose he is right, Rose," said Jerry at last. "I don't want to make trouble for you. Let it be burned rather than that."

THE boy had sunk in his chair—rather pale and shaky from his brief fury. She put her arm about him with a wonderful smile in her eyes.

"There are different ways of burning," she said. "Sacrifices are offered in that way."

She knelt on the hearth and held out the book in both hands, looking across at Jerry.

"This is my sacrifice for my soldier brother," she said, "that he may, without blemish, fight ever in the right, for Ireland!"

She laid the leaves on the blaze and knelt watching until there was left only a glowing curl of ash. Hector Laud regarded her somberly. Never before had she so openly defied him. He was in sullen rage, knowing that he had gone too far, and his rage extended to the book, and the writer of it.

And he knew himself justified in his rage when she rose from her knees and smiled on Jerry.

"It is gone, soldier boy!" she said. "The pages are gone out of sight, but the real book is here," and she touched her breast. "I know it all by heart, as does more than one of the Irish, and I will teach it all over to you again!"

A FORTNIGHT later the hell of revolution broke loose in Dublin, and a reign of terror ruled. Wild fear dominated the official group, and strange jail-yard killings sent a shudder around the world. Hector Laud was sharer of that obloquy, and his wife, to whom no one would tell the truth, divined the unspoken. She shut herself in a room apart, and refused to look on his face.

Jerry was brought to her there, shot and speechless, and gave work for her hands. The wound temporarily affected his speech and he had lain apparently dead for over an hour in the barricaded street where the bullets sang their death-song over him. Then some stranger had gone into that inferno after him and got him to safety. Civilians were forbidden within that street, and the stranger had been taken before the military authorities to answer for his humanity. No one could learn what had become of him; no one but the sister of the boy was especially interested, and it was difficult for any friend to seek answers to her questions, knowing that her husband was the one man whose information concerning suspects, arrests, and executions was absolutely accurate. He could tell her if anyone could — but no one could even hint that to her! Every friend of hers was shrouded in gloom because of the bond

between them — they called him "Butcher Laud" when out of her hearing.

The second day Jerry could articulate, but his nerves were a jangle, and his eyes pleaded with her.

"Kerry, Kerry!" he whispered over and over. The physician listened and assented.

"Get him out of this if you can. Everyone he sees here is filled with the devil's own horrors we've been going through. By all means get him to the hills where there is peace."

Jerry whispered for "Siod," once or twice, but no one knew where to find Siod.

IT was the last week in April, gloriously bright, and the warm sun calling out patches of bloom in every southern nook. The green grass was springing, and the coils of fern uncurling in wood and sedgy marge.

She rode west to Kerry in a curious trance-like state with the wounded boy and a nurse. There were moments when she felt the after-effects of some shock she had lived through, though the actual shock, or the nature of it, had been forgotten!

She wakened herself sobbing of some unknown sorrow, and the eyes of Jerry followed her in mute question. He could whisper disjointed words, but was forbidden attempt at conversation. Rest and nursing were his only need. The wound coming so soon after his former convalescence had been too heavy a strain for quick recuperation — yet he would recover and, as the physician said, live to fight again.

The very birds of the air appeared to be bearers of disaster to the hills, for there was no welcome there for the family of Argial; herdsmen and farmers who once met her with the smile of welcome on every road now turned aside in the hidden boreens, or crouched back of hedges as she walked abroad.

Shamas Ronayne alone came to her, a frail old white figure in gray, and driving the white donkey of Michal Donn.

"None other would be coming for question to a Laud of Argial, and I am the one coming," he said. "What may happen to me is as nothing at all, for my time is near, and none to sorrow."

"I will sorrow," said the lady of Argial. "The very land itself sorrows for every man like you who passes. You are of the living records of the unwritten things — the sacred things."

"It is of the lad," he said. "He was to come back once, or send word back to us once, when he had given his message in Dublin and joined a regiment. No word has come, and it is nearing a month. He was not of the revolution, for his message to them was a different one entirely. Kerry and Cork he reached in time, but Dublin he could not have. His name is not heard of, though many are asking."

"Yes, my own brother is asking — and my own heart is asking."

He looked at her with a new, wondrous look of comprehension, and tears shone in the unfaded blue of his strangely youthful eyes. He touched her green sleeve, as he might have touched the sacrament.

"Ah! 'Rose of Kerry!' I should have known, I should have known!" he said. Her eyes, darkest gray, shaded darker by black lashes, met his gaze steadily and in pride.

His own eyes closed, and he murmured a prayer at what he saw there.

"It has been always, I think," she said. "I was as a child walking in sleep — and he called me awake!"

"Aye! And your voice would now be calling him to answer if any voice could," said Shamas. "I have been walking the glen paths in the night with a great fear on me, and no shape to that fear. 'Before the hawthorn is in bloom,' was what he said at his going away, but the buds have opened surely on Templard, and no word coming! The man they wedded you to is the man who knows all things of them in prison, and them who were killed there. I — we all had thought that you would surely be knowing."

"Shamas," she whispered, and then again in growing horror — "Shamas!"

"Aye," he answered. "There are fearful hearts waiting the words, but none would be asking an Argial, barring myself — and it is you I am asking."

"And I am no Argial!" she said. "I am only a woman of Ireland, this day. If a crime has been done against him, Argial must answer!"

SHE sent message by wire so imperative that some reply must come back. After that there was nothing to do but the waiting, and Shamas she would not let go.

They talked long, and their speech was all of him, and one told him of their childlike game of the fairy queen and

the Irish prince who found her in the shadows of the druid temple on Templard.

"I mind well the day," said Shamas, "for on the hearth-stone that night he wrote the poem-tale of the Dark Rose of Red Hugh O'Donnell, and it blooming again in Kerry for fragrance to all Ireland — alive and blooming after three centuries of heavy feet trampling it in the mire! He worked all the night at it, and his eyes alight and no weariness on him! Molly was in a fair fright over it, for he said he was writing a dream he had in a fairy rath — and it the eve of Beltain! As this is."

"This?" she said, and stared at him.

"Aye, what else? In the cities the people are forgetting them old days of the fields and the new bloom, but here we are not forgetting, for it ends the black winter for us and gives us hope of harvests to come."

"And I forgot!" Her voice was incredulous. "Shamas, my mind has been full of him, yet for the first time in ten years I forgot! Since last Wednesday I have walked as in a trance, and I seem to have lost dates or records of time. Beltain to come : — and I to forget! Why, it was like a tryst-time, a day to wish myself back on Templard, and hear his voice again there — his young voice singing."

"Wednesday," mused Shamas. "That was the night I walked sleepless. The restlessness would not take itself away. So — Sunday and all as it is, I could stand it no longer, and took the road to you."

"Sunday?" she repeated. "I had forgotten that also! The hour has gone by when an answer could reach me by wire on a Sunday! It will be morning now before we can get it, but you must not go back until it comes. You are the only comforting soul near me."

"I could not sleep under the roof of Argial," said Shamas.

"Neither will I this night," she said, "but you can rest, and wait, and what I can do for your comfort I will."

THE twilight crept through the dusky wood, and quiet settled over the sombre mass of gray Argial. A star glimmered here and there in the deepening sky.

She paced her chamber alone — waiting!

A lad passed through a far meadow singing a love-song to some mate of the thatched roofs, and she paused at the window listening until the last sound died away — but it was another voice of which she was thinking.

"And this night!" she murmured. "This sleepless night of the tryst-time! Ah, to be but once on Templard under the stars — and his young voice singing there carefree as before!"

She walked away from the window and the witcheries of the thought. She lit a reading-lamp, and picked up a little book — Meyers' translation of the fragments of verse of *Liadan and Kurithir*. The ancient love-story of the two poets had its own fascination for her always, but this time her eyes rested on one verse and did not go beyond. It was Liadan's recognition of the forbidden voice singing its love to her —

"Belovéd is the dear voice I hear!
I dare not welcome it,
But this only do I say:
Belovéd is the dear voice!"

She sat quite still, looking at it. Her dark eyes grew darker, wider; every sense seemed suddenly alert in a new way. Her breath was stilled to listen; no sound broke

the darkness or echoed in the halls — yet far away beyond — above — she felt the vibrations of wordless harmonies!

They passed, and left her staring at the words:

"Belovéd is the dear voice I hear
I dare not welcome it!"

She arose, took from a closet a long-hooded cloak of green, and turned out the light.

"But I dare," she whispered, and slipped out and down to the stables in the moonless night!

THROUGH the gray forest, darkening to green, she rode. And over the high moor the black horse sped like a night-bird skimming the earth. She was filled with a great exultation — the cloud under which she had been oppressed seemed to lift when she emerged from the forest of Argial. She knew she was doing the thing she had longed to do always — and if there was but hawthorn abloom on the height it would be recompense!

Willingly and joyously the horse ran to the first circle of the rath, but beyond that he would not go! In vain she whispered — in vain she petted and caressed him. He planted his feet and pointed his ears and reared only to come down again in the same spot. She walked him quietly to a different point and tried again — nearer he would not approach.

She slid from his back and petted him — he was wet and trembling.

"This then must be the place of parting," she whispered. "Why should you have fear of it?"

She wondered why she whispered where there were none to hear, but could not answer her own query. There seemed to be utter stillness on the world, and she scarce heard her own footfalls as she went up and up over the circles, her eyes straining for first glimpse of the hawthorn — if it should not be in bloom!

But it was. Even in the night without moon she could see the soft white of it, and as she crossed the third circle the whiteness of it grew more clear until she glanced above to see what sudden light of star was reflected by it.

The sky was the same, and the stars were the same; the mass of bloom gave out its own soft radiance in the night.

And besides the bloom there was a movement. She heard a breaking branch, and halted there, breathless, listening!

Then his voice — the voice she had listened for — the voice like no other — spoke.

"Come no nearer!" it said. "I broke the hawthorn for you and have waited four days and four nights — longer I may not. Hush! Do not speak to me! I know the thing you would know — and the thing Shamas has asked — and it is for you to see."

She did not speak, for she could not! A strange cold wall seemed to circle her, and her eyes were drawn to the shadow of the cromlechs where the two had once sheltered from storm. She peered forward as dim light fell on the darkness under the arch — and through it — as if far away, and seen through reversed opera glasses, she perceived men in uniform — other men in civilian dress — a stone wall very high — and a man there who appeared to dominate — it was Hector Laud of Argial. Men with rifles passed across the scene, and a man under guard entered. He wore a cap, and her heart leaped and then grew cold — cold as her speechless lips.

He was questioned by Argial, and by others; he shook his head. He spoke, but she could not hear the words. Once he smiled at them in a tired way, as at some question many times answered. Argial turned aside and made a sign; a man with a white handkerchief folded it and moved forward, but the man alone by the wall waved him away. He removed his cap and let it fall beside him on the paving; he spoke a brief word or two, looking straight ahead as if into her eyes, and then stepped back against the wall and made a signal. The wind tossed aside the lock of bronze-gold hair on his forehead and he stood an instant with his hand over his eyes.

Then something happened, and he sank forward and lay there and shadows blotted all out as the men, Hector Laud among them, bent over the fallen body!

"That is how it was," she heard him say. "I have at last done something for the land, and so dared come again to meet you here. O Dark Rose — I have sung your songs as I could — but strength is going again. Hush — do not speak! You will rest and wake to find the hawthorn abloom. You will grieve — but green hope will cover your life! You will not be without love — without music!"

He moved out from the screen of the white bloom, and the radiance of it shone on his face, grave and pale. In his left hand he bore the broken branch; his eyes were luminous and wonderful in the starlight.

A puff of wind blew aside the curls over his forehead, and she would have cried out if she could, for a dark mark was there — the open path of the lead of death! He lifted his hand, and it also was pierced.

"No," he said, reading her thought, "they do not use nails in palms today for their crucifixions, but we still die — guiltless!"

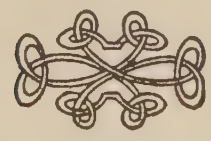
She strove to break through the frozen silence in which

she was locked—only to speak to him once—once! Only to tell him—

But his luminous eyes forbade, though the smile there was the smile of perfect understanding. Music came from somewhere about them—the *suantre* by which earth-cares are silenced—she felt her eyes closing under its magic—many harp strings were sounding softly afar off—was it the lullaby he had once sung to her under the druid arch? She did not know—she was so nearly wrapped in slumber.

But through that mist of far harmonies there came one clear, low voice—his young voice singing the prophecy of the *Dark Rosaleen.*

Your holy delicate white hands
Shall girdle me with steel!
And I will rear your royal throne
Again in golden sheen!
'Tis you shall reign, and reign alone
My Dark Rosaleen!
My Own Rosaleen!



IT was there they found her asleep in the early dawn, wrapped in the green-hooded cloak and the spray of hawthorn across her breast.

Only Shamas and Hector Laud came over the third circle, and Shamas crossed himself at the sight.

"It is a priest we should have brought with us to this place," he said, "for no living woman would sleep on Templard."

Laud of Argial was blanched by fear, and halted on the

edge of the rath and called to the man holding the horses below.

But she wakened at the shout, and stood up. The languor of sweet sleep was still on her eyes and she smiled at Shamas, whose gaze was the first to meet hers. The hawthorn fell at her feet; she lifted it, looked at the dew on it and on the cloth of her cloak — and remembered!

Her eyes were dark lightning as she faced Argial.

"Not one step nearer, so long as you live, and may yours be a long life — and remorseful!" she said. "My question to you has been answered without you, and this place is too sacred for your feet!"

"You are a raving madwoman," he cried, and his face flushed red in anger. "Who else would range the forests at night and sleep on the moors alone?"

"I was not alone, Shamas," she said, ignoring Argial and looking only at the old man. "He was with me here. Yes — he kept tryst with me on Templard and sang me to sleep with a song of hope! It is true, Shamas! He came back from the dead to do that, and he left this broken bloom here as witness when I would waken; it is true, Shamas!"

"I believe it is true," said the old man, "for sleep was put on me, too — a heavy sleep of rest — and that is the first sleep coming to me for four nights — his soul is no longer calling us to hearken — God and Mary save him!"

"Four nights," she repeated. "Yes, that is what he said — four days and nights he was waiting for me, and the blossoms held for me here!"

Laud of Argial glared at the two and uttered an oath of destruction on the old man.

"Are you both maniacs?" he demanded. "How did you know to tell us to follow her tracks to Templard? And

who is the lover who sings you to sleep. You — you — shameless with your peasant mates!"

"It is the man you had killed in secret against a prison wall four days ago," she said steadily, but without looking at him. And to Shamas she said: "That is indeed how Hugh Siod died! He saved my brother and died for it. Did they think to silence his songs by killing the poet?"

"You are both insane rebels!" shouted Argial. "A second time I have followed you to this place of secret meetings — and it will be the last — you shall go in a locked room of Argial until you are sane again!"

"I will go in no room of Argial ever again," she said. "The cart of Shamas or Michal will bring my wounded to me in some more simple abiding place; and friends will be found."

"They will surely," said Shamas, "and honor will be yours — and love will be yours."

"You are moon-struck Irish dreamers, silly as children! Do you think I will allow you to disgrace Argial with a scandal of this sort? You will go back with me if I have to call those men below to bind and carry you!"

"Man," said Shamas, stepping between them, "go easy with your threats in Kerry. She has but to call out to the men down there what she told to us here of Hugh Siod — and you might not yourself see Argial ever again!"

"Stand aside! I have my rights — she is mine — she is —"

"No!" said Shamas Ronayne with such quiet force that Argial moved a step back at the intensity of the soft voice. "No, Argial! Rights of her you have never had, and there are many knowing that! She was traded to you by a

gambler who did not own her — and that in her young, unknowing years! There was never bond of right between you two, and now there is foul murder dividing you!"

Argial glared cold fury at the incredible peasant.

"And this is your new sort of courtier?" he sneered at her; "the sweepings of the mud-huts!"

She drew a great breath of freedom and shook back the hood from her dark hair. The first rays of the sun struck the gray pillars back of her, and the white hawthorn, and flooded her with the rosy radiance of a new day.

"It is, indeed!" she said, and a throb of exultation was in her voice. "Both peasants and princes come from the huts of our land. They are the souls to whom he sung of freedom; they will be my courtiers — and my brothers, and my sons! Hugh Siod came back from death to sing a prophecy here to me — I will live among his people and work for that prophecy all my days!"

Argial scowled from her to the stalwart Kerry man climbing the hill, and turned away.

Shamas gazed at her with a reflected light of joy on his face.

"*O Kathleen na Hulihan, your face is like a star,*" he murmured.

ACCORDING to official records it was six days after Beltain ere the dominating political group of Dublin Castle was forced to make public an account of the execution, without trial, of the writer, whose palm and brain were pierced by the same bullet in the jail-yard on

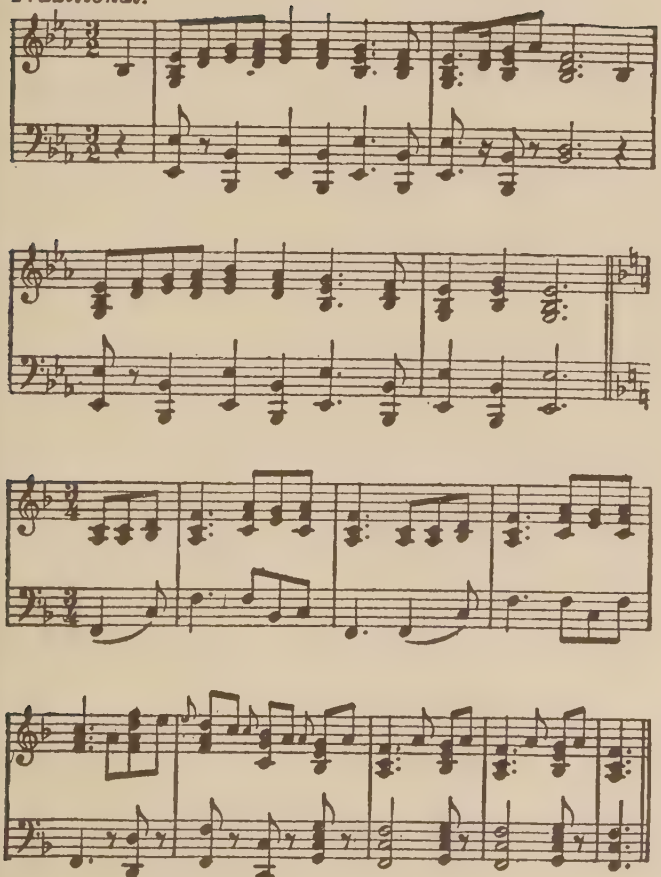
the twenty-sixth day of April! There had been ten days of absolute secrecy covering the matter, and the explanation of Argial to his superiors concerning its ultimate publicity gave him a bad hour.

To tell them that a girl on an old rath on a Kerry hill had seen a vision of that death, and could not be silenced, was an absurdity not to be advanced.

The investigating board was composed of hard-headed unimaginative men, and Argial preferred reprimand from them for lack of executive ability, rather than be ridiculed by them for repeating any such curious phantasies as those evolved by the Irish mind!

Lullaby

Traditional.



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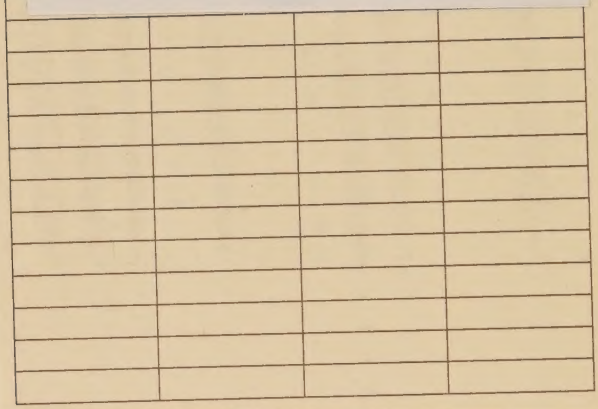
Ryan, Marah Ellis (Martin)
1860?-1934.
The Druid path.



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